Tarot of the
Celtic Fairies

Mark McElroy

Artwork by Eldar Minibaev

Tarot

of the

Celtic Fairies

Mark McElroy
Artwork by Eldar Minibaev

Mark McElroy
Artwork by Eldar Minibaev

Tarot of the Celtic Fairies

Layout and graphics: Lo Scarabeo

© 2010 by Lo Scarabeo.
Via Cigna 110 - 10155 - Torino - Italy
info@loscarabeo.com - www.loscarabeo.com

All rights reserved.
No part of this book can be used or reproduced in any way
– including publication on the Internet –
without the express written consent of
Lo Scarabeo, except in the case of brief extracts
to be used in reviews or critical articles.

First edition 2010
Printed Leo Paper Group

Index of Contents

Introduction
5

The Major Arcana
10

The Minor Arcana
55

Cauldrons
59

Stones
80

Spears
101

Swords
122

Understanding Tarot
143

Working with Spreads
150

Making the Deck Your Own
158

Introduction

I would like to tell you that I have always been a fan of fairies.
I would like to be able to say that I have long been a fan of Brian Froud or Cicely Mary Barker. I would like to say my bookshelves are packed with authoritative fairy books. I would like to tell you that I grew up steeped in fairy lore, or that I come from a long line of people who claim to see and speak with fairies. Unfortunately, I can do none of these things.

I grew up in the American South, a generic white guy set adrift on a sea of history with no anchor to my Scotch-Irish roots. At some point, someone in my bloodline made the voyage to America, but who that person was – and how or when she came to be here -- has been lost to time.
Along with many other Scottish and Irish immigrants, that ancestor traveled south to Appalachia, where the rolling hills and green meadows must have stirred memories of home. After arriving in the hill country, her attention would have turned to working the land; over time, all connection to a homeland ripe with fairy lore would be lost.
As a result, the only fairy I ever heard about as a child was the Tooth Fairy, which my parents described as a collector willing to exchange quarters for discarded teeth. (As an adult, I confess find the idea of a supernatural being creeping into my room, slipping its hand under my pillow, and paying money for teeth more than a little disturbing!)
Later, in junior high and high school, the word "fairy" came to have an entirely new meaning. At our school, the "fairies" were the effeminate boys – but the label was also applied to anyone who failed to excel at sports or who seemed the least bit interested in getting an education.

Preliminary sketch

To avoid that label, I poured a great deal of energy into "fitting in," and, like many young people, I spent my school years "in the closet." And so, along with "fag" and "queer," "fairy" became one of those words I didn't care for much.

Decades later, I got a note from Riccardo Minetti at Lo Scarabeo, who wrote, "Mark, after talking about it, we think you'd be the perfect choice to design our Tarot of the Celtic Fairies".

By this time, I had worked with Riccardo to create several successful Tarot decks and books, and I was eager to work with Lo Scarabeo again. But … a fairy-themed deck? I thought about the option for all of three minutes, then politely but firmly said, "No, not for me".

Like any good editor, though, Riccardo is persistent – so he came to me again, asking questions. Why didn't I want to do the fairy deck? (I admitted I knew nothing about fairies and noted my distaste for the word "fairy.") What if I were given absolute freedom to develop the deck in any way I liked? (Nice – but still, no thanks!)

Riccardo persisted. "What if you were to see this as an opportunity to reconnect with your roots?"

I hat to admit – that interested me.

In fact, Riccardo's request came at a time when my lack of connection to my ancestors was beginning to bother me. For the first time in my life, I found myself wanting to know more about my heritage. For more than a year, I had been trying, in vain, to find a way to make a meaningful connection with my ancestors, their lives, and their beliefs. And here, from out of the blue, was an opportunity to look into the folklore and mythology of Scotland and Ireland – the stories common folk (like my ancestors!) used to communicate their culture and make sense of the world around them.

I accepted the contract immediately.

I began by immersing myself in fairy folklore, giving in to an obsession with cataloging the names, characteristics, and relationships of every character in every

Composition studies

Celtic fairy story I could find. The result of this intensive research was a design for a forced and academic Tarot deck that was more a museum of fairy lore than a working oracle – and Riccardo had the good sense and the good grace to say, "Why don't you try some other approach?"

And so, with my head brimming with stories of fairy kings and Celtic lore, I packed my bags and headed off to Scotland and Ireland, determined to see first-hand the land that gave rise to these Celtic fairy tales. To this day, I can't fully describe what happened to me there. First, despite the fact I had never visited either Scotland or Ireland, there was the unmistakable feeling that I was coming home. Next, there was the shock of seeing so many people on the street who looked as though they could be my blood kin. And then, after leaving the city for the countryside, there was the strange sensation of actually seeing the hill of Tara with my own eyes … and, after walking through an emerald pasture, actually touching the Stone of

Destiny – the sacred stone of the Irish kings – with my own bare hands.

None of this prepared me, though, for the eerie beauty of Newgrange. Part observatory and part tomb, Newgrange is built into the crest of a rolling green hill. The stones that line the outside are covered with spirals and trefoils – diagrams and symbols that defy direct interpretation. To this day, no one really knows the purpose behind the creation of this massive stonework dome.

Whatever its purpose, its design reflects a sophisticated knowledge of astronomy. Once a year, at dawn on the Winter solstice, a shaft of light from the rising sun pierces the building's dark heart, illuminating the central chamber with a soft orange glow.

We were not there for this event, which has become so popular that names must be drawn, lottery-style, from a long waiting list. But we were there on a winter's dawn, with a huge orange sun rising into a pale

Background studies

blue sky. The air was flinty with cold, and the grass underfoot was dusted with silver frost.

One by one, members of our small group ducked down and made their way into the claustrophobic tunnel that leads to the central chamber. Once there, with lanterns extinguished, we spent several minutes in silence, listening to the sound of a room my ancestors built five hundred years before Egyptians conceived the pyramids.

Once back in the States, everything fell into place. This time around, the fairies were more than academic figures in fairy tales. The longer I worked with them, they became fully-realized characters, representing qualities and forces and archetypes – mythic placeholders, providing invaluable insights into world of my ancestral home. Next, as universal themes began to click into place, I began to see correspondences between the fairies and their Tarot counterparts.

Slowly, slowly, the structure emerged, and, in the end, I was able to create an oracle that moves between the two worlds. The Celtic Fairy deck provides a vivid window on the world of Celtic Fairies ... but it also operates as a faithful, authentic Tarot deck.

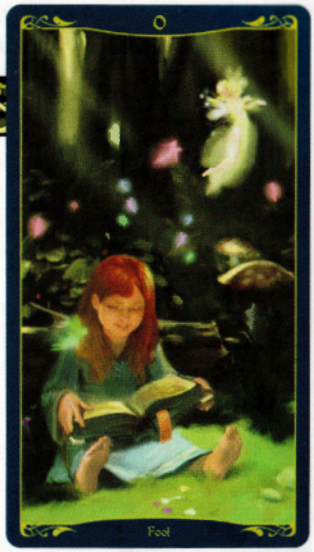
It will come as no surprise to anyone who has attempted to find parallels between two parallel systems of belief that some correspondences between fairy lore and Tarot archetypes worked better than others. Whenever possible, I would choose a specific fairy to represent and amplify the meaning of a specific card. But when the correspondence felt forced or hollow, I elected to create a scene that would honor both traditions – without compromising or distorting either one. Some will find my choices insightful; others will rave about their ignorance. To this, all I can say is that the creation of this deck was, for me, a labor of love – and an opportunity to reconnect, after all these years, with the rich legacy of my ancestors.

The Major Arcana

In Tarot decks, the Major Arcana (or "Greater Secrets") are associated with powerful themes, supernatural influences, major milestones, and transcendental experiences.

Unlike the cards of the Minor Arcana (which tend to depict events from day-to-day life), the Majors reveal why events come to pass and reveal the role they play in the Universal Plan. When Majors appear in a reading, give them extra weight and attention; the message they have for you is important!

0. Fool



Keywords
Innocence and Wonder

Creator's Commentary
Traditional images of the Fool – from the bedraggled, wandering lunatic of early decks to the dignified, callow youth of the Smith-Waite deck – reflect literal and esoteric meanings assigned to the Fool over the years.

I knew the Fool would more than likely be the first card someone saw when opening the Celtic Fairies pack, so I wanted the Fool to be a card that could serve as a point of transition from our world into the enchanted world of Celtic Fairies.

For this deck, I hit upon the image of a human girl – one of the very few human figures in the deck – encountering fairies for the very first time. In the script, she is a Celtic child, peering through ferns at a fairy processional – the same processional, in fact, that can be seen very clearly in Trump XXI - The World. Given Tarot's close association with the "triumphal parades" popular in the Middle Ages, I liked linking the first and last cards in the Majors sequence with a parade.

As sometimes happens, though, the artist had other – and, in this case, very good – ideas. On the final version of the card, we see a red-haired girl leafing through a book – presumably the one you are reading now. The air around her is swarming with fairies – but whether these are real or imagined is left for you to decide.

I intended the girl – one of the very few human figures in the deck – to embody the viewer's curiosity about Tarot and the fairy kingdom. And while the final version of the card is very different from what I imagined, I think the image remains successful, as it positions reading this book as the first step on a path toward the world of the Celtic fairies.

Important Symbols

The child. Early decks depicted the Fool as a bedeviled older man; later decks dignified and invigorated him, redefining him as a callow, inexperienced youth. Here, the Fool becomes a child – a tabla rasa, a blank slate with unlimited potential. How would a child respond to your situation?

The zero. Echoing the "0" that has become, in modern times, the number of the Fool, the Fool card represents a boundary between the mundane world and the world of the Celtic Fairies. That said: given that our world and the fairy world are, technically, the same, the real trick here is one of perception. Are you bold enough to see the same old world in a brand new way?

The fairy. This fairy creature is generic – an archetypal being. Her commanding presence draws attention away from the fact that there are many other, less-visible fairies present. To what extent are you focusing on one aspect of your situation … to the exclusion of other possibilities?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you have a great deal in common with the young woman depicted here. Faced with a new opportunity, you're excited about potentials and possibilities. Are the options surrounding you real or imagined? The facts may not matter as much as your state of mind.

Questions to Ask

How often do I look before I leap? What might happen if I do the opposite of what I tend to do?

What would a carefree soul do?

What would I do if I were completely unconstrained by budget, tradition, or consequences?

1. Magician

Keywords
Industry and Activity

Creator's Commentary
The earliest Tarot decks depict Magicians – or Bateleurs – as roadside tricksters. They are the sort of fellows who loiter on the Riverwalk in New Orleans, luring tourists into clever sucker bets ("Will you give me five dollars if I can tell you where you got your shoes? Okay … you got them on your feet!") or lightning-fast games of street chess. Later versions of The Magician, dignified by the esoteric schools, became lightning rods for the gods. Their empowered stance – one finger pointing to heaven, the other to the ground – positions them as masculine channels for the Divine Will. Their power is not their own; instead, their efforts seek to bring the World Below into better alignment with the World Above.

After some deliberation, I decided my Magician would be a leprechaun. Leprechauns take great pleasure in befuddling the greedy and lazy, but they are also the worker bees of the fairy kingdom, bringing industry and concentration to bear against seemingly impossible tasks.

While many people claim to have heard the tap-tap-tapping of leprechaun work in progress, savvy locals know better than to waste their time actually looking for these fairies. You'll only see leprechauns when they wish to be seen, and any information they provide will likely steer you away from treasure.

Sober, they tend to be annoying. Drunk, they are relentlessly mischievous. And whatever their blood alcohol content, they have their own agendas, so you're well advised to take anything they have to say with a grain of salt.

Important Symbols

The leprechaun. Traditional decks depict either a trickster or an empowered male; both archetypes find expression in the leprechaun, whose talent for deception and masculinity (if females exist, we have not seen them) make him the perfect fairy Magician. How might his slight-of-hand or his male energy hold the key to your situation?

The two bags. Leprechauns carry two purses or wallets at all times. One contains a silver coin (that always returns to the purse); the other, gold coins (that always turn to leaves or ash). What resources do you carry that, if properly deployed, could help you now?

The tools. Forget the mythical pot of gold; the tools on the table are the real treasure. What tools are at your disposal? How might you use existing tools in unexpected ways?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you should consider how hard work, unbroken attention, and focus could help you reach your goal. In addition, the leprechaun invites you to question information, identify what you really value ... and consider how just a little razzle-dazzle might charm people into noticing the value of your good ideas.

Questions to Ask

What skills do I bring?

What delusions am I clinging to? What might happen if I set them aside?

How might masculine, focused action help me achieve my goals?

II. Priestess

Keywords
Intuition and Reflection

Creator's Commentary
In the very earliest Tarot decks, this card is illustrated with a remarkable image: a female Pope.

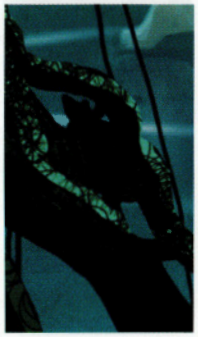
By now, anyone who's read any worthwhile Tarot books knows several tales about the origin of this card. Is she the legendary Pope Joan, a disguised woman who rose to the highest office in the Church disguised as a man? Is she a veiled reference to a female relative of Duke Ludovico Sforza, elected the leader of a heretical sect of Catholicism? Is she a personification of the Church itself, which Scripture refers to as "the Bride of Christ?"

If 19th and 20th century esoteric scholars knew the truth, they didn't much care for it. Instead, they were busy converting "La Papessa" into their "High Priestess." In this guise, the mysterious figure on the card lost her three-tiered Papal head dress, her book generally became a scroll, and her identity expanded to encompass any number of powerful female goddesses, including Isis, Persephone, and Diana.

Finding a parallel to this virginal creature among the female creatures in Celtic folklore proved to be an almost impossible task. Any associations I attempted ultimately struck me as forced and awkward.

So, eventually, rather than select any single Celtic fairy for this image, I elected to go with the concept of the High Priestess of the fairy folk. Like all priestesses before her, she is the embodiment of mystery: lost in reflection, pondering the deepest questions. She is attractive, elusive, and, for those not attuned to esoteric energies, utterly unapproachable.

The fairy Priestess looks fragile ... but that's only because her formidable powers of perception and per-



suasion are currently focused inward. Make no mistake: she's the equal of any leprechaun, with just as much magic at her command.

Important Symbols

The priestess. Glittering like a dragon fly, she rests directly on the mirrored surface of the water. What might happen if you were to follow her example, take a deep breath, and spend some time in quiet reflection? How can your actions embrace the mystery of the current moment?

The reflection pool. Still water guards deep secrets. What lies beneath the surface of your situation? What might you sense if you looked beyond the obvious? Do you see the truth ... or a reflection of your hopes and fears?

The roots of nearby trees. Roots imply stability, but they also draw nutrients up from the depths, making life possible at the surface. What inner strength is your most certain foundation – your unshakeable conviction? What inner reserves are waiting to be tapped? How might growth be linked to reaching down inside yourself ... and pulling up something you've submerged, repressed, or set aside?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's time to consider how thoughtfulness, reflection, and apparent inactivity could resolve the conflicts surrounding you. We often have a bias toward blunt, masculine action; consider, as an alternative, the potential value of a more passive, "wait and see" approach. In the silence that ensues, answers that would elude a flailing warrior may come creeping up and display themselves exclusively to you.

Questions to Ask

How might watching, waiting, and listening give me an advantage?

What is the value of doing nothing? What happens if I take no action at all?

What secret knowledge do I possess that might prove helpful?

III. Empress

Keywords
Nature and Fertility

Creator's Commentary
In traditional decks, the Empress is usually a motherly figure, often pregnant. In later decks, she is surrounded by symbols of her fertility: sheaves of wheat, busy bees, baskets of harvested fruit.

Street side fortune tellers inevitably associate the Empress with pregnancy, but more studied Tarot readers broaden the range of meanings to incorporate symbolic pregnancies (the unfinished art or unexpressed ideas you carry within) or the concepts of ripeness, a state of readiness, or a nurturing or protective spirit.

Though I knew the choice would anger purists, I chose Onagh for this card. I know, I know: she appears virginal and thin, and, in many ways, she defies traditional expectations of how the Empress should look. But, as the Wife of the fairy King, Finvarra, she is the Queen of all fairies … and, in my mind, a perfect choice for the energies expressed by this card.

Despite her youthful and vigorous appearance, Onagh is infinitely old – older, in fact, than time itself. Here, she touches down lightly on a stalk of ripe, golden wheat. Her long blonde hair trails behind her, whipping to and fro in the wind. Her diadem is woven from yellow flowers and snowflakes, and her dazzling robe draws every eye. Her attendants bear appropriate gifts and offerings – reminders of both her nature and her authority.

Unlike many vengeful or dangerous female creatures in Celtic folklore, Onagh is recognized for her unconditional love and nurturing spirit. Women have called on her for everything from help with problematic hair to relationship advice, and she is the epitome of faith-

ful monogamy (despite her husband's lack of faithfulness). Her association with verdant forests also gives her the agricultural associations befitting a proper Empress.

Important Symbols

The stalk of wheat. As an essential grain ripened for harvest, the wheat represents fertility and potential. What might you harvest, if you applied yourself to the task of "bringing in the sheaves?" What signs be telling you that the "harvest time" has come?

The forked carrot. The forked carrot is a Celtic fertility symbol, emphasizing Onagh's productive (and reproductive) powers. How has productivity, or the lack of it, contributed to your situation? How might being receptive be the key to being more productive?

The ripened cherry. The sensuality of a piece of ripened fruit provides a sharp contrast to the aloof beauty of the Fairy Priestess, and carries within itself the seeds of its own duplication. What seed waits for you to notice its potential? How might you move from contemplation to active involvement?

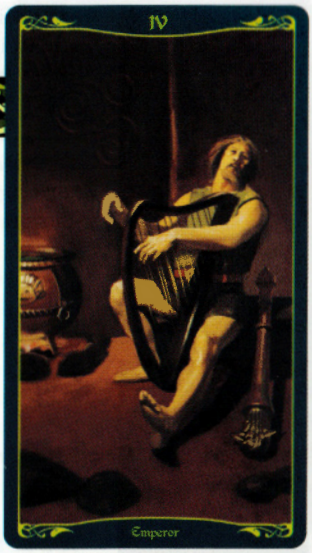
Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, the time has come to take a long, hard look at "the fruit" of your efforts. If you have been pursuing a goal, what results have you achieved? If you've been trying to bring someone around to your own point of view, consider abandoning the use of force and adopting a more gentle, nurturing approach. Sometimes, people have to be made comfortable – well-fed, embraced, accepted – before they can consider the options you provide.

Questions to Ask

How can I do, achieve, or produce more? What resources would be needed? How can I acquire them?
Who or what needs to be nurtured?
How might my attitudes toward sex and/or childbearing play a role in my situation?

IV. Emperor



Keywords
Authority and Regulation

Creator's Commentary
Over the years, the Emperor has generally been rendered as an embodiment of masculine power – the ultimate domineering father figure. Male or female, you can channel this power … if you can be mature enough to perceive how limitations can be liberating.

Generations have depicted the Emperor as rigid, distracted, and severe. In this card, though, the regulatory energy of the Emperor is filtered through Dagda, the King (and the most powerful) of all the fairies. He sits inside Bru na Boinne – the 5,000-year old observatory still standing in modern-day County Mead, Ireland.

Close at hand are his club (capable of killing nine men with a single blow), his cauldron (an inexhaustible source of a life-storing potion), and his harp (which regulates the orderly progression of the seasons). Though king, he dresses in common clothes … and though a fine singer, he is primarily known for his jealousy and temper.

I chose Dagda for this deck's Emperor because I loved the tension between the restraint suggested by his mastery of the musical arts and the lack of restraint suggested by his infamous bad temper. In this duality, I caught a glimpse of my own inner battle: my sincere desire to do more and be more … and my almost infinite ability to be distracted from the work at hand.

I can bear down on myself and get more done, but in the process, I lose access to the random input that fuels creativity. On the other hand, I can give in and let my mind wander without restriction … but then, at the end of the day, I have nothing to share.

The setting of this card supplies the key, I think: for

everything, there is a season. The person who masters this insight becomes Emperor of his or her own soul – and, by extension, the world.

Important Symbols

Newgrange. The design of Bru na Boinne reflects a thorough understanding of astronomical and seasonal phenomena. What dependable, intrinsic laws have played a role in the creation of your situation?

The cauldron. The magical cauldron moves us to ask, "What is the source of an Emperor's power?" Is that authority real ... or imagined?

The club. Capable of terrible destruction, the club is one means of enforcing the Emperor's authority. What penalties will you face if you break the rules?

The harp. A contrast to the brute force of the club, the harp suggests the value of a more subtle means of control. How could you encourage others to volunteer you as their leader?

Interpreting the Card

This card invites you to explore the role that restriction and regulation play in your situation. Who sets the rules? Who enforces them? While we tend to see rules and regulations as limitations, it's important to remember that strict rules (like pitch, tempo, and sequence) make beautiful things (like music) possible. These rules may always be ignored ... but it's a good idea to master them first, so you'll have some idea of whether your improvisations are rooted in genius or ignorance.

Questions to Ask

In my situation, which tool should I employ: the club ... or the harp?

Who has authority here? What is the source of that authority? Is it imagined or real?

How might an awareness of "the rules" be holding me back? How might the rules be supporting me?

v. Hierophant

Keywords
Faith and Religion

Creator's Commentary
Above a sloping green hill, the sun rises, dispelling the morning mist. Beneath a towering oak, a lone Druid greets the day. His long silver hair and silver beard are symbols of maturity and wisdom, while his robe and staff represent the role he plays in a community of spirit. He is the embodiment of natural magic and spiritual authority – or, at least, appears to be.

And this, of course, is the challenge of the Hierophant trump: is the figure before us a sincere and trustworthy guide … or an opportunistic guru, taking advantage of the weak? In more traditional decks, this card is the Pope, who is still regarded by millions as the infallible mouthpiece of the Christian God. But can any man, woman, guide, or office trump the wisdom of the still, small voice? That remains for you to decide.

Especially in the metaphysical community, I've observed a disturbing trend, especially among those who have been spiritually abused by fundamentalist Hierophants. Having dismissed out of hand any insights or rituals associated with the religion of their birth and culture, there is a rush to embrace whatever clap-trap any self-appointed New Age guru spouts.

When we allow this to happen, we do little more than swap one Hierophant for another.

Which, at least for me, raises some interesting questions. Whatever the tradition, does one bad Hierophant spoil the entire system of belief? At what point, if any, do we need a Hierophant to show us the way? And is it possible, I wonder, to bypass Hierophants entirely and connect ourselves directly to the Divine?

Important Symbols

The Druid. Every spiritual system produces individuals who channel (or claim to channel) Divine authority on behalf of others – but not everyone dressed as a guide is a worthy spiritual leader. How can you distinguish between faith and fraud? Before trusting someone with your direction and your soul, how can you be sure he or she has your best interests at heart?

The Staff. The staff is useful as an external symbol of authority and power – but don't mistake the symbol for the reality it represents. True authority arises from within. What evidence is there that your calling (or your guru) is truly Divine? What external symbols of power are appropriate for you?

The Attendants. Without willing followers, authority collapses. Have you conducted yourself in a way that would inspire a heart of submission in others? What qualities make a leader someone you would be willing to follow?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, the time has come to examine what you believe and why you believe it. Claims have been made. Signs have appeared. Now, it's up to you to decide what the Truth is. Will you peer out from behind the blades of grass, waiting for a minister's guidance ... or will you take on the mantle of authority and become your own guide?

Questions to Ask

What role do faith and belief play in my current situation? In whom or in what should I place my faith?

Who is someone you could turn to for guidance? Why do you trust this person? What qualities do you attribute to him or her?

How might joining a community of spirit support you and help you to grow? What are the benefits – and challenges – of being a solitary practitioner?

VI. Lovers

Keywords
Romance and Choice

Creator's Commentary
Early versions of the Lovers trump actually depict a trio: a young man, an older woman, and a younger woman. Interpretations differ. Is this a son, smothered by a meddling mother who wants to choose his wife for him? Is this a virile young man, forced to make a choice between two women who desire him?

Later, esoteric scholars would revise the card dramatically, dropping the third party (or, in some cases, converting her into an overseeing angel) and converting the remaining couple into Adam and Eve.

Street readers inevitably read this card as "Romance!" but a more nuanced interpretation suggests that The Lovers is (and always has been) about choice. Do you listen to your mother … or your passion? Should you be drawn to experienced wisdom or shallow beauty? And – whatever the consequences for yourself and the human race – do you obey the edicts if God … or bite into that juicy fruit?

The card's more modern association with love and passion has its uses, though, as these strong emotions tend to cloud clear judgment – and drove my choices for the fairies depicted on this version.

On the left of the great oak sits the Leannan-Sidhe. She appears to us as a desirable woman who, at least upon first glance, desires us as much as we desire her. In fact, she is invisible to all but her prey. Having hypnotized a lover, she extracts his or her life-force, leaving nothing but an empty shell behind.

Her counterpart, the Gan Cenach (or "Love Speaker") encourages young men to spend all their hard-earned wages on unworthy women. The gigolo and pimp of

the fairy kingdom, he poses as a friend, a confident, a mentor – but, in fact, he's in it for the money.
Both teach us the same lesson: especially when passions run high, strive to see your situation clearly ... and make wise choices.

Important Symbols

The Leannan-Sidhe. Because of her nature (see below), the Leannan-Sidhe encourages us to question what attracts us. You know what you want – but do you know why you want it?

The Gan Cenach. Our handsome friend has ulterior motives, and, like his counterpart, he has the ability to be enormously persuasive. As a symbol, he represents actions we tend to take even when we know them to be unwise or unhealthy.

The Oak. The mighty oak has long been a symbol for strength. Here, it stands between twin forces of attraction, serving as a place of refuge – a safe, shady spot where good decisions can be made.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, the time has come to make a decision to join with someone, become a part of something, or give in to (or resist) a powerful attraction. See the card as a reminder: decisions have consequences. Before committing, verify that all parties involved are pure of heart.

Questions to Ask

What role might love or attraction play in this situation? What are you really passionate about?
What role does passion or attraction play in the choices you're making? If you were free to do what you wanted to do, without concern for budget or consequence ... what would you do?
What action would lead to unity? In this situation, is unity an advantage ... or an obstacle?

VII. Chariot

Keywords
Fame and Momentum

Creator's Commentary
I have always loved the Chariot trump. Older versions of the card can look almost static, leaving the Chariot driver mired in what appears to be little more than a stationary granite block. The symbolism is clear: you've arrived. Now what?
Later versions of the card emphasize the appeal and excitement of forward motion. The Rhorig deck translates the Chariot into a race car. My own Bright Idea Deck depicts the Chariot as a Segway personal transporter. Both versions speak to our passion for progress and our tendency to barge forward – when, in reality, a little reflection might better serve our needs.
Informed by these images, my quest for a suitable Celtic fairy for the Chariot card led me to disturbing tales of the Pooka. Some stories cast him as a stunted little man, but others depict the Pooka as a wild black stallion bound in chains. (I love the tension between raw horsepower and symbols of restraint.)

The Pooka shows up around the end of October with two tasks on his mind: trampling the last of the season's blackberries … and luring unwise children to their doom. The Pooka thrives on terror, and the moment a rider climbs on his back, he streaks at high speed toward the nearest cliff and plunges over.
When he shows up at your home, he may call for you by name … and if you don't answer, he will trample the fence, dig up the flowers, and wreck the property beyond all recognition. Still, you're better off ignoring him.
All said, the Pooka is a pretty good symbol for the energy of the Chariot: there's a price to be paid for progress. When opportunities arise, it's wise to won-

der: is there real potential here ... or is this just the Pooka calling my name?

Important Symbols

The Galloping Steed. The pooka's strength and speed are symbols of progress – but each step the pooka takes brings us one step closer to disaster. Temper your urge to move forward with awareness and caution. If you find you must take a ride on the pooka – get off before he reaches the cliff!

The Blackberry Vine. As the pooka streaks toward its destination, it tramples the last of the season's blackberries. What price will you pay for rapid progress? As you move forward, what will be neglected ... or destroyed?

The Unicorn. The pooka's mad efficiency achieves goals quickly. There are, however, kinder, gentler alternatives. Are there ways you could maintain forward momentum ... yet leave less destruction in your wake? If the goal were elegance instead of haste, how would your plans be revised? Why plunge ahead blindly ... when a little charm might do the trick?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's time to think about progress: how it has been made so far, how it might be made today, and what will be achieved if your current plan is followed to its logical conclusion. If you don't have a plan, now's the time to make one. Without a destination in mind, how will you know when you've arrived?

Flailing around without making much progress? Perhaps it's time to stable one steed and switch to another.

Questions to Ask

What will success look like? How will I know when I've arrived?

Is it possible my goal has changed in the middle of the journey? If so, how can I set a new course?

What signs point to moving forward? What signs suggest the need to rein things in?

VIII. Strength

Keywords
Power and Dominance

Creator's Commentary
The Strength trump gets illustrated in many different ways, depending on the kind of power favored when the card is designed. In some old decks, we see a mature woman, striking down columns. In others, we see a figure – almost certainly Hercules – clubbing a lion. The Waite-Smith deck gives us a well-dressed lady, closing the jaws of a lion.
All these images address two different kinds of strength. It is one thing to be able to topple columns; it is another thing to actually go out and do it. It is one thing to slay a lion; it is another thing to make slaying lions your calling card. It is one thing to force a lion to close its jaws; it is another thing to encourage this through gentle persuasion. Actions define us; realizing this is our first step toward real Strength.

Especially given this context, some will be surprised to find Whoopity Stoorie – the Celtic Rumplestiltskin – depicted here. Her frightening exterior conceals her secret strength: the ability to spin unlikely raw materials (usually straw or flax) into exquisite goods (in this case, white linen wedding shirts). She is happy to put her skills to work for others, but demands terrible payments in return.
Whoopity Stoorie deploys her unique strength to achieve selfish goals. But as she works, she sings, and, as she sings, the lyrics of her song reveal her only weakness: victims may cancel all debts simply by saying this fairy's name aloud. The lesson? Even those with supernatural strength can be undone by a lack of self-control.
Finally, the tale of Whoopity Storrie also reminds us that knowledge is power. Being able to name a thing

gives us power over it – a good principle to keep in mind when our inner Strength wavers in the face of what frightens us most.

Important Symbols

Whoopity Stoorie. Whoopity Stoorie appears to be an unattractive and helpless old woman; in fact, she is a powerful spirit with remarkable abilities. In your situation, how might appearances be deceiving? Could someone or something, apparently powerless, be concealing unseen strengths?

The Spinning Wheel. The wheel seen here is entirely ordinary; any magical output depends on the skills of the operator. How might applying your personal strengths transform ordinary resources into remarkable tools?

The Wedding Shirts. Whoopity Stoorie's skills make turning flax into linen look easy. What skills do you possess? What abilities (which others might consider magical) might you be overlooking, because, to you, these abilities seem mundane?

The Eavesdropping Maiden. Once the maiden learns Whoopity Stoorie's name, the balance of power shifts completely. How might your strength depend on discovering (or protecting) sensitive information?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, the time has come to practice self-restraint, ponder your true purpose, and define exactly where your real strengths lie. The situation calls for discipline and a single-minded pursuit of your goals. This is a time to practice what you preach. Your success will hinge not so much on effort or persistence, but on discovering what you were created to do ... and doing this work with all your might.

Questions to Ask

What is my calling? What is the one thing I can offer that no one else can?

What role does discipline or self-control play in my life? Do I need more ... or less?

What do you need to know or do in order to gain the upper hand?

IX. Hermit

Keywords
Experience and Seclusion

Creator's Commentary
Traditionally, the Hermit trump depicts an elderly man in a gray robe, his face almost obscured by a peaked hood and white beard. In some decks the eyes are open, but in others, he looks down at his feet. In many illustrations, he stands perfectly still, as if dozing or meditating while holding himself upright. In one hand, he carries a staff; in the other, a lamp containing a six-pointed star.

Generally speaking, he appears to be on a quest for knowledge, and, having reached the heights of insight, he now holds up a lamp to light the way for others. Most modern interpretations of the card, though, focus on his isolation: having withdrawn (from the world and into himself), he is better positioned to see all things clearly.

As I worked with themes of quests, isolation, and transformation, I was led to the bizarre story of St. Murgen. Stories differ, but the gist of the tale is this: a young girl, swept out to sea with her dog, survived in an underwater cave, eventually becoming a merrow – a mermaid-like fairy who wears a small red cap fashioned from red feathers. When spotted by humans, merrows ask for help searching for a magical item; without it, they say, they cannot return to the sea.

Murgen spent more than three hundred years in watery exile before being caught by sailors on a ship headed for Rome. She pleaded to be returned to Ireland, and a catholic bishop on board the ship agreed to do so. Because of her enchanting voice and ability to perform miracles, she became much beloved by the locals – and she was eventually declared a saint by the catholic Church!

Important Symbols

Transformation. Murgen began life as a human, was transformed into a fairy, returned to her human roots, and then became a saint. How might reinventing yourself play a role in resolving your situation? Can you take control by transforming yourself?

Withdrawal. During Murgen's sojourn in the sea, she adopted the powers and abilities of the native Merrows. What might you learn if you withdrew from the crowd ... and viewed your own situation from afar? How can you become more objective? Could the answer to your question be found in emulating the habits or abilities of others?

The Lantern. Murgen lights her way with an anglefish – a deep-sea creature equipped with a glowing headpiece. What light can you shed on the situation? What lantern (or source of inspiration) leads your way? What experience or information can you share that would make the path easier for others to follow?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it is time to emulate the habits of St. Murgen and the Hermit. Withdraw. Seek objectivity. Get some distance between you and the problem – mentally, emotionally, or even physically. Review the path that brought you here.

What lessons have you learned along the way? How has experience changed you? How might these lessons hold the key to resolving the dilemma you're facing now?

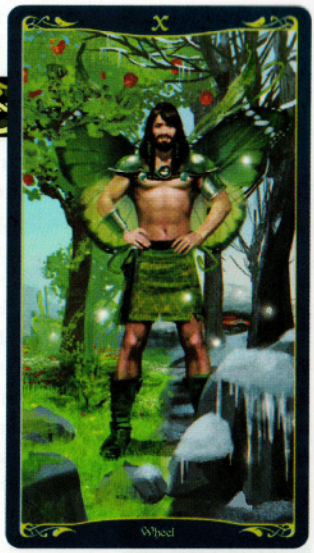
Questions to Ask

How would someone completely outside this situation see it? What advantage would distance bring?

What keeps me from withdrawing from this situation? How might some distance be beneficial for you? For others?

How will surviving this change you? What lesson will you learn?

x. Wheel



Keywords
Time and Cycles

Creator's Commentary
The older I get, the more fascinated I become with time: the ways we mark its passage, the cyclical nature of events, and the way the world keep creaking slowly, inevitably forward.

That's one reason I suppose the observatory at Bru na Boinne – or Newgrange – was such an object of fascination for me during my travels in Ireland. The most honest guides at the site tell the truth: no one knows why the creators of Bru na Boinne built this place, or what its original purpose was. That said, there's no denying that the site was deliberately constructed to monitor and respond to the progression of the seasons.

And, as an historical artifact that predates the pyramids (Bru na Boinne, remarkably, dates to the 35th century BC), the observatory/tomb itself is a kind of time traveler, having sailed across fifty-five centuries or so before materializing in modern times.

I had these thoughts swirling through my head when I came across the story of Angus Og, the son of Dagda and one of the Queens of the Sidhe. Here, he appears as a muscular young man (though, like all the fairies, appearances can be deceiving). And while his exterior is certainly appealing, it's his inner gift – his ability to speed up or slow down the passage of time – that makes him a remarkable character. (This also explains why this card depicts him standing astride the change of the seasons.)

In the minds of many Tarot readers, the Wheel is associated with cycles (even random ones), so it's natural to extend that association to the cyclical nature of the universe and the passage of time. Here, the Wheel

has been transmuted into the circular dome of Bru na Boinne – which, the old stories assure us, was Angus Og's homestead to begin with.

Important Symbols

Bru na Boinne. Whatever its purpose, this observatory and tomb clearly played an important role in marking and identifying the passing of the solstices. The ancients knew the universe – like life – is a series of cycles; everything old is new again, over and over again, forever.

The Splitting of the Seasons. While we must wait for the passage of time, Angus Og can flash forward (to get past the boring parts) or extend the moment (to linger in better days). If you had this ability, would you linger in winter, or rush forward to spring?

The Swan. To win the freedom of a maiden who had been transformed into a swan, Angus transformed himself into a swan and flew away with her. Together, they mastered the trick of singing music so beautiful it would lull mere mortals to sleep for three days and three nights.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you should ask yourself, "What role do cycles play in my current situation?" What kinds of things happen to you again and again? What patterns repeat?

You might also consider the role that time will play in the resolution you seek. Should you be passive, and allow time to heal all wounds … or should you be active, like Angus Og, and take action as a way of proving your passion?

Questions to Ask

What cycles are at work? Should they be maintained … or broken?

If you do nothing, what will happen? If you hesitate, will an opportunity be lost?

To what extent might your situation be completely random – no one's fault?

XI. Justice

Keywords
Balance and Clarity

Creator's Commentary
Traditional illustrations for the Justice card tend to show a severe-looking character – sometimes lady Justice, sometimes King Solomon – holding a sword aloft and carrying a set of scales. Sometimes, as in American courts, Justice is blindfolded, suggesting objectivity and an inability to be swayed by appearances. In other cases, as in the famous Waite-Smith Tarot, Justice is clear-eyed, so that nothing escapes her unblinking gaze.

I'm sure there is, somewhere, a Celtic fairy story involving a trial – though, frankly, the fairies in general seem to favor vigilante justice and revenge over more boring (and often less satisfying) court procedurals! Rather than force a character or story to fit the archetypal mould of the Justice card, I chose to imagine what a fairy court might look like.

Here, a male fairy – the accused – has been brought before a fairy empowered to distribute justice on behalf of those assembled. The subject of the trial is a typical matter of fairy mischief: stolen money. (It remains a common thing, even today, to blame mislaid – or wasted! – money on fairy activity.)

The female fairy holds a twig from a rowan tree – her equivalent of a sword. Druids and witches alike know that the dense wood of the rowan tree make it perfect for fashioning wands, walking sticks, and dowsing rods. While the wood has the ability to ward off evil influences, the leaves, when added to incense, enhance one's ability to see the future clearly.

In her other hand, she holds a sprig laden with two hawthorne berries. Hawthorne, a berry which grows near entrances to the Underworld, has long been as-

sociated with fairy folk. Harvested when the hawthorne blooms, it's lucky; picked at any other time, it will attract bad luck and financial ruin.

Important Symbols

The Rowan Sprig. Rowan, useful for dowsing and spell casting, is a symbol for power and protection from metaphysical influence. What actions can you take to keep your perspective clear of bias?

The Hawthorne Berries. Hawthorne, as a harbinger of the Underworld, suggests the need to look beyond the apparent and discover hidden truths and motivations. What thoughts, words, or deeds need to be brought out into the light?

The Audience. Hidden in the background, fairy folk look on as the trial proceeds. Who is watching you? What commentary or testimony might they have to offer? What verdict will they render when they evaluate your performance as a minister of justice?

The Coins. Taking a few coins can seem like such a small infraction. But who knows what the consequences will be? A stolen item can be replaced; restoring lost trust will be far more difficult.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you should begin by considering what Justice means to you. What's fair? What's reasonable? And who gets to set the standard by while all actions will be judged?

There is a need here for balance, fairness, and clear vision. Have your words and deeds contributed to an atmosphere of objectivity ... or have they muddled the waters, making it even more difficult to know right from wrong?

Questions to Ask

What would an objective observer say?

What's the right thing to do?

What standard can you consult in order to establish right from wrong?

What would happen if, instead of seeking justice, you offered mercy instead?

XII. Hanged Man

Keywords
Perspective and Reversals

Creator's Commentary
Early versions of the Hanged Man were likely associated with the archetype of the traitor. His distinctive posture – dangling by one foot – recalls a medieval punishment for traitors. In some versions of the card, coins rain down from his inverted pockets – a reference to Judas, who betrayed the Christ for 30 pieces of silver.

The occultists of the early 20th century favored a more enlightened take on the card. Crowley's version depicts the crucified Christ, suspended between heavenly power and earthly mortality. This greatly broadens the card's symbolic scope, connecting it to themes of sacrifice and transformation through trial.

The more familiar Waite-Smith image depicts an unknown Hanged Man, his legs crossed in a way that suggests the number four (a symbol for, ironically, stability). Though suspended by one leg, he appears unnaturally calm, and his dangling golden locks exude an aura of enlightenment. Readers tend to interpret the card to mean "a change in perspective" or "an event that changes the way you see the world" – both of which sound much better than "a reversal of fortune" or "a betrayal."

In this version of the card, a delighted child discovers an unhappy fairy, whose last-minute escape has been foiled by a strand of ivy. The moment is ripe for potential. Many folk tales hinge on humans demanding favors in return for freeing trapped fairies; the reward the human receives, though, is usually more heinous than handsome. Those who stumble on fairy processions are often kidnapped, never to be seen again – and children who vanished without a trace were often said to have been taken by fairy folk.

Will the trapped Sidhe here become a pet ... or a problem? At this point, the answer's unclear ... and, as is often the case, the answer is likely a matter of perspective.

Important Symbols

The Child. Children have a unique perspective, rooted in their innocence and inexperience. Here, the child could suggest the need to adopt a more innocent perspective ... or, as the Apostle Paul, wrote, the need to "put away childish things" and see the world through more experienced eyes.

Inversion. The trapped fairy dangles upside down. Through his eyes, the world has been inverted. How might you radically revise your vision of the world? How can your personal situation be turned upside down and seen from an entirely different angle? What risks would be involved in this approach?

Light. The Hanged Man's aura suggests transformation; here, the fairy's glow confirms his supernatural nature and draws the interest of the child. What, in your situation, is alluring? And how might this appeal suggest a way that you could transform yourself or your perspective?

Interpreting the Card

This card suggests you need a new perspective – though, at first, you may consider this radical transformation to be a betrayal of your current morals, ethics, or world view. Rethink assumptions. Toss out outdated beliefs. Change yourself by changing your thoughts.

Be aware, though, that transformation has its price. Once you experience a critical shift in perspective, your old persona may no longer fit as comfortably as it did before. Proceed with care!

Questions to Ask

How can I see this situation from a completely different perspective?

What is the exact opposite of what I believe ... and how might that be true?

How am I trapped? How might this trap become a catalyst for positive change?

XIII. Death

Keywords
Death and Transformation

Creator's Commentary
Death comes in many guises, and means different things to different people.
For the young, Death may seem like a distant and unlikely event, completely divorced from any connection with the present moment. For the middle aged, death may be obsession that poisons the ability to enjoy the present ... or a motivator to get work done before the harvest comes. For those with extended illnesses, Death may be seen as the harbinger of welcome release – the ultimate Mercy.
For occultists influenced by the Waite-Smith deck, Death will be seen as a skeletal rider astride a pale horse. Kings fall as he approaches, and only those empowered or protected by the Church (or those too innocent to fear him) seem to possess the power to stand against his inevitable approach.
If the Wheel reminds us that all things are cycles ... Death reminds us that all things end.
In Celtic folklore, the Banshee (or "Woman of the Mound") is often associated with Death. She may appear as any one of three woman (echoing the old "Triple Goddess" motifs): a young woman in a white dress (the Maiden), a stately matron (the Mother), or a gaunt, hunchbacked woman with glowing red eyes (the Crone).
On this version of the card, we see all three incarnations at once, an indication that, in every moment, things begin, things are perpetuated, and things end. The Virgin Banshee casts her eyes away, while the matronly Banshee looks directly at us, marking her ability to be "in the moment." The hag looks away, beckoning to something or someone we cannot see –

a reminder that, as humans, we never know what's lurking just around the corner.
She stands in a western graveyard – a garden of eternal peace. What do you feel when you confront the Woman of the Mound?

Important Symbols

The Maiden. At some point, we are all virginal: inexperienced and innocent, unschooled in the ways of the world. The card suggests something is ending … but when one thing ends, another thing begins. How might this moment be transforming you from Crone to Virgin again?

The Matron. Her frank, unblinking stare reminds us of the value of being in the moment. Her symbolic message? Rather than worry about what might happen or what cannot be changed, it's far better to fully participate in reality. Can you set fears aside and focus on what is?

The Crone. The Crone's apparent frailty helps disguise her enormous power. How might allowing something to end or collapse empower you? What might happen if you stopped struggling and embraced the idea that all things end? How might the knowledge that all things end motivate you in the present moment?

Interpreting the Card

While it's dramatic to associate this card as a harbinger of physical death, it's probably more useful to see it as a reminder that all things end. A cycle is coming to a close; how you handle this reality is likely a strong indicator of how evolved you are: emotionally, spiritually, physically.
The Banshee's three guises remind us that every ending is inextricably linked to a beginning. How can you embrace this natural cycle of change?

Questions to Ask

What is ending? What is beginning? How does one moment create the other?
How is growth linked to accepting the inevitable?
If you allow one version of your self to fall away, who or what might you be empowered to become?

XIV. Temperance

Keywords
Moderation and Restraint

Creator's Commentary
Most people dread the appearance of the Death card. I dread Temperance.
I'm not a very temperate person. I am hot … or cold. I am fully engaged … or completely bored. I love people passionately … or dislike them completely. Perhaps this has something to do with my upbringing in a Christian fundamentalist household, where I was taught that people were either right or wrong … saved or lost … on God's list or destined for Hell. For us, there was no middle ground.
I find myself wanting to tell the angel on the Waite-Smith Temperance card: "Make up your darn mind! Get in the pool or get out! And stop mixing that drink – it's time to serve it already!"
Perhaps that is why I feel in love with the cluricauns – fairy creatures I'd never heard of until I started researching this deck. The lesser-known cousins of the leprechauns, the cluricauns have no wealth or hidden money … but they are far more friendly and far more likely to be seen by mortals like you and me. The love strong drink and rowdy behavior. If something loud and wild is going on, chances are there's a cluricaun nearby, cheering things on.
So: I've cheated a bit here, for, in this deck, the Temperance card has been inverted a bit. Think of it as a warning: if you can't self-moderate – reigning in your passions, striving for the objective middle, keeping your desires in line – this is what you'll become: a plump little figure, sitting astride a frightened sheep, with no idea at all where you're going.

When all is said and done, I admit my cluricaun is not a poster child for Temperance. Perhaps you can imagine him, then, with this caption: "Don't try this at home!"

Important Symbols

The Farm Animal. Sheep and goats alike need herding – someone to guide them and keep them on the path. To what extent is your own sense of temperance intrinsic? To what extent does your morality depend on guidance, rules, and punishments meted out by others?

The Cluricaun. He's fat for a reason – cluricauns adore rich food, and they can't stop eating it, even when their buttons burst. What foods, people, activities, or environments challenge your self control? Do you feel a need to limit your exposure to these ... or do you revel in them?

The Cups. One holds ale, one holds wine. One is made quickly; the other takes time. How good are you at prioritizing (and devoting proper amounts of time) to the tasks that come your way?

Drunkenness. There's a time for wild abandon ... and a time for Temperance, too. Which is called for now ...and why?

Interpreting the Card

This card is a call for temperance: avoiding extremes, and finding the middle way. It's very likely that, in some sense, you've taken an extreme position or failed to see both sides of an issue. This card is a reminder to rein yourself in ... and, by blending opposites together, create something new.

To play devil's advocate, you might also ponder how Temperance might be the problem. Is there, perhaps, a need to call a cluricaun?

Questions to Ask

What are the extreme positions? What is the middle position? Where do I fall on this spectrum?

To what extent could your actions be described as temperate? How might you be extreme?

How might you compromise? Can everyone win?

xv. Devil

Keywords
Repression and Denial

Creator's Commentary
Perhaps because of this card's association with the forces of repression and denial, very few people rejoice when the Devil trump appears. In Tarot, the Devil is a reminder that we are not as much in control as we like to think we are. The more we repress a desire or deny our dark impulses, the stronger the Devil becomes.

While it can terrify us at first, the lesson behind this trump is a powerful one: to be our best selves – to set ourselves free from depression, disease, and duality – we must embrace our Shadow. Unless we can be strong enough to own everything and everyone we are, we will spend our entire lives struggling with secrecy and guilt. In other words: we will be slaves to the Devil.

Every culture has its Devil. In Celtic fairy stories, that Devil is Gwyn ap Nudd. Originally a god of war and death, he fell through the ranks of deity to a controller of demons and devils and, later, in the Authurian legends, the regulator of the Underworld.

Unable to recruit more powerful followers, he recruits the spirits of unbaptized children to be his minions. On his quests for these unfortunate souls, he rides through the skies on a "mad hunt" – or frantic search – generating thunderstorms and wild weather along the way.

Gwyn ap Nudd's name hints that, like Lucifer, he has fallen from a position of great favor. "Gwyn" means "fair" or "light" or even "holy" – suggesting that, once, this fairy was held in high regard. Now, though, insane with rage and motivated by his desire for revenge, he rants and rails against the forces of light. Rather than embrace who and what he has become, he poisons the present by pining for lost glory.

Important Symbols

The Underworld. Gwyn ap Nudd rules the Underworld – a dark and unseen place where light never penetrates. As a metaphor, the Underworld suggests any insight or information we would prefer to ignore. What personal truth are you repressing? Until you embrace it, you will be trapped in the Underworld forever.

Minions. Gwyn ap Nudd is surrounded by tiny sparks of spirit – the souls of unbaptized children – he tricks into doing his bidding. As symbols, these sparks remind us to ask, "Am I being manipulated? Am I trying to manipulate others?"

Deformity. Because his once handsome face has become scarred and deformed by rage, Gwyn ap Nudd reminds us that repressed anger is a poison. His deformity is a symbol – a reminder that unexpressed emotion poisons the soul. We can escape a similar fate by speaking our mind – or by living in the present instead of mourning a shattered past.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's time to ask, "What's being denied?", "What unpleasant facts are being overlooked?", "What motivations remain undisclosed?", "What desires are being repressed?", "What important words have been left unsaid?"

Set aside illusions. Strive to see yourself and the situation in a realistic light. Rather than push the truth away, break the Devil's spell by embracing reality – no matter how unpleasant or personal that reality may be.

Questions to Ask

What do I know about myself or the situation that I refuse to acknowledge?

What illusions do I cling to?

How am I focusing on the past instead of the present?

How can I move from denial to acceptance?

XVI. Tower

Keywords
Suddenness and Shock

Creator's Commentary
Amadan – also known as "The Stroke Lad" – very nearly wound up as the Fool of this deck.

Amadan embodies whimsy (in fact, he is sometimes referred to as "The Fool"), but his foolishness is blended with a vicious mean streak. Especially in the month of June, he is known to blast unfortunate victims with all the symptoms of a stroke: slack facial features, slurred speech, loss of vision, and mental impairment.

He appears in various guises: sometimes a beast, sometimes a child, sometimes a clown, and sometimes a short man wearing a hat and red kerchief. Some stories claim he changes his shape every second day, making it virtually impossible to describe him. Even so, those who see the Amadan frequently recognize him for what he is – but the realization comes too late to save themselves from his spiteful shenanigans.

The only defense against his power? To whisper the phrase: "The Lord be between us and harm."

Because of the debilitating and sudden nature of his attacks, I ultimately assigned Amadan to the Tower – a card associated with sudden (and often debilitating) change. The insights symbolized by the Tower leave us slack-jawed and reeling, our visions shattered, our thought processes impaired. All we've worked for seems to be gone, and, in an instant, we go from confident adults to frightened children.

But, as the old stories confirm, those who deal intelligently with Amadan's appearance – with prayer, with quick thinking, or by calling on their priest (one of the oldest names for the Tower is "The House of God") – frequently go on to live healthy, normal, happy lives.

One imagines they are happier and wiser for having survived a brush with the Stroke Lad himself. May our own Tower moments produce in us this kind of evolution!

Important Symbols

The bolt of lightning. Amadan strikes unexpectedly and without warning. The news, situations, or insights associated with the Tower usually arrive without warning, like bolts of lightning, shaking us to our very foundations. When a change comes "out of the blue," like a thunderclap on a clear summer day, we have experienced a Tower moment.

Amadan's Moodiness. Amadan attacks according to his own whimsical logic. Virtually anything, from an unfinished task to an unanswered knock at the door, may provoke him. In the same way, devastating events leave us wondering, "Why me?" Often, a great deal of time may pass before we can make sense of a tragedy.

The background towers. Cities rise and fall, and, as in life, the destruction of one project often clears ground for another. What new options might a painful loss free you to pursue?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you may be struggling with (or on the verge of) a surprising or sudden change. Not every aspect of every situation is under our complete control, and the Tower reminds us that best-laid plans are often disrupted by unforeseen complications. Embracing this truth helps us "go with the flow." While we cannot control the course of events, we can certainly control our reaction to them.

Questions to Ask

How can I find the strength to begin again?
How might one sudden, unexpected loss be positioned as a new and exciting opportunity?
How can I keep from being attached to one specific outcome?

XVII. Star

Keywords
Hope and Guidance

Creator's Commentary
From the dawn of time, the stars have given reliable guidance to sailors and astrologers alike. For this and other reasons, The Star has become associated with guidance, direction, and revelation – and, by extension, hope. The Tower knocks us down; the Star is the moment when, having paused for reflection and meditation, we dust ourselves off, pick ourselves up, and chart a new course.

If I were to summarize the lesson of this particular Star card in one sentence, it would be this: choose your stars wisely! Your guides may not set direction for you … but they do play a role in shaping your fate. Choose the wrong star, and the revelations you receive will be flawed; attuned to these, you will not reach your intended destination.

Instead of the unclothed nymph (or Isis Revealed) seen in more traditional decks, the Fairy Tarot depicts a member of the Sheerie. Particularly in dark swamps, the Sheerie appear as distant, twinkling lights. Travelers who take these to be the lights of a distant city will regret the decision, as the Sheerie deliberately arrange themselves over deep, brackish pools of water.

They may also manifest in the form of a wizened little man. He never speaks, but he holds a torch of bundled straw aloft and gestures as though he knows a safe path through the gloom. He has only one goal: to lead lost and weary travelers deeper into the marsh.

The modern world may not present many opportunities to follow the Sheerie into the swamp, but every single day – online, in the media, in the office, in spir-

itual groups, at churches – we find individuals who assure us with all confidence that they (and, often, they alone!) know the path we should take.
Before you follow, check the stars.

Important Symbols

Points of light. Not every light is a star; not every guide is reliable. A wise traveler plans, checks direction, verifies the accuracy of the map, and sets his or her path accordingly. If a guide isn't taking you to the places you need to be … why keep following it?

The burning broom straw. This Sheerie manifestation is carrying a torch of broom straw aloft. Though it burns brightly, it will burn out quickly. In other words: the Sheerie doesn't expect this interaction to take very long! Before hitching your fate to a star, make sure you've chosen one of heaven's true eternal lights.

The labyrinth. Etched into a nearby stone is a classical labyrinth: a symbol that has come to be associated with meditation and inner journeys. I placed it here to remind the weary traveler that the inner voice is often more reliable than any external guide.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn the Star, it's time to re-examine goals, check your direction, and re-evaluate your progress. New information is being revealed, and it's possible that old decisions and habits – now outdated – need to be reconsidered and set aside. Rather than follow obvious signs to stagnant waters, be open to an outpouring of fresh new insight. Hope springs eternal; the only limit is our ability to challenges in a new light.

Questions to Ask

Who or what guides me? How can I know my guides are trustworthy?
Are old rules, habits, and guides still relevant to my new directions?
How might rekindling hope depend on being open to new insight and information?

XVIII. Moon

Keywords
Fantasy and Mystery

Creator's Commentary
Traditionally, the Moon is associated with the romance and mystery of the night. Along with the Priestess and Empress, the Moon (because of its cyclical nature) has also come to be associated with feminine energy. Given these associations, the Waite-Smith Moon has always struck me as a little "off." (Heresy, I know.) I understand the esoteric reasons for the distant towers, the baying hounds, and the emerging crayfish ... but over time, as these symbols mean less and less to modern audiences, the visual impact of the card has become divorced from some of its more intriguing messages.

In the Celtic Fairy deck, under a full moon, we find Cally Berry – or The Blue Hag, as she is more often called today. Cally Berry, with her stooped posture and bedraggled clothing, is yet another incarnation of the Crone goddess.

Just as the Moon waxes and wanes throughout the month, Cally Berry's powers wax and wane throughout the year. She is at her most powerful from Samhain (November) to Beltane (May), when she spends the night walking about and pounding the earth with her magic mallet. (This hardens the ground, protecting it from harsh winter weather). From Beltane to Samhain, in her weakened state, she buries her mallet beneath a tree and transforms herself into a cold blue stone.

Attuning oneself to lunar energies has the benefit of opening us to repressed ideas, romantic notions, animal passions, and wild dreams. Those who find Cally Berry's concealed mallet enjoy similar benefits, becoming "masters of their own fate". Improper handling of the mallet, however, leads to madness and death,

suggesting the need to take careful stock of your own psychological state before attempting to take your fate in your own hands.

Important Symbols

The Moon. The Moon waxes and wanes according to predictable, regular cycles. What role do similar cycles play in your current situation? How might things evolve if you do nothing, allowing nature to take her course?

The Night. The nighttime setting of this card evokes a sense of mystery and magic. The night itself is a symbol – a temporary condition that limits physical vision and prompts us to compensate with our other senses … including our imagination. The night reminds us to look beyond the obvious, to peer into the unknown, to embrace fantasy, and to draw new inspiration from the patterns in the silver shadows.

Pounding the ground. We all have our work to do, and, despite her apparent age, Cally Berry fulfills her job with gusto. How might your best interest be served by pounding the ground now – in the relative cool of a metaphorical winter – instead of waiting for sunny springtime?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you would do well to open the windows of your soul to the power of the Night. Dream. Imagine. Fantasize. It's possible that you could use a little time to howl at the moon, explore passions you've been repressing, and indulge in activities your conscious mind rejects.

To be ready for springtime growth, you must prepare the ground during winter. What physical, emotional, or spiritual work can you do now – before the Sun comes up?

Questions to Ask

What insights am I resisting or repressing?

How comfortable am I with the idea of getting out and howling at the moon?

What role might change and cycles play in my current situation? What happens when night gives way to day?

XIX. Sun

Keywords
Energy and Empowerment

Creator's Commentary
During most of my time in Ireland, the sky overhead was covered with a blanket of low, gray clouds. Even at noon, the air was damp and chilly, and the landscape was a study in luminous greens and shades of silver.

When we arrived at Bru na Boinne, though, the morning sun burst through the clouds, flooding the world with golden light. The skies turned blue. Spiderwebs, dusted with ice crystals, trapped the energy and began glittering and vibrating. The frosted hillside blazed with shades of red, and orange steam began rising from the ground.

After days without sunshine, we found ourselves facing the light. Sure, we were squinting and rubbing our eyes – but we were also transformed by that welcome burst of warmth, arching our backs, spreading our arms wide, and embracing its heat and power.

That's the moment I had in mind when I scripted this card, which, for me distills that moment into a solar fairy of my own creation. His distinctively masculine energy rises in tandem with the Sun; as it ascends, so does his strength. In my imagination, he is the young Prince Dagda before time and responsibility transformed him into the care-worn Emperor King.

The Sun trump is a celebration of masculine energy and its ability to prompt regeneration, transformation, expansion, and attention. It prompts us to see clearly, to spread our wings and dare to take flight … but also to avoid being dazzled by the brilliance of the spotlight. Like Icarus, when we fly too high, too soon, we risk losing our wings.

Celebrate your victories. Embrace compliments. Honk your own horn. Let the energy of the Sun dispel the il-

lusion of disconnection between your sense of self ... and the Source of all things.

Important Symbols

The Sun. The Sun is the source of life, the Father and Sustainer of all things that roam the skin of Mother Earth. It reminds us that we are an expression of unlimited, abundant power ... literally, an embodiment of the same brilliance that lies at the heart of every sun in the universe.

The Solar Staff. This creature of the Sun wields a solar staff – a means of channeling heaven's power into the fertile earth. Let this staff be a reminder of the old saying, "Make hay while the sun shines." In other words: while conditions are favorable, take charge and make things happen.

The Monarch Wings. Monarch butterflies migrate like birds, following the Sun to warmer climates. The solar fairy has the wings of a monarch butterfly to emphasize his connection to the Sun ... and to remind us of our own responsibility to be an envoy of light in a dark and chaotic world.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's time to channel symbolically masculine energies of attention and validation. Open yourself to joy. Ponder your own brilliance. Let others celebrate your achievements. Celebrate success and prepare for victory. In the process, just make sure you aren't blinded by your own bright light. The key is to channel solar confidence without feeling rushed, getting distracted, or becoming absorbed in your own celebrity.

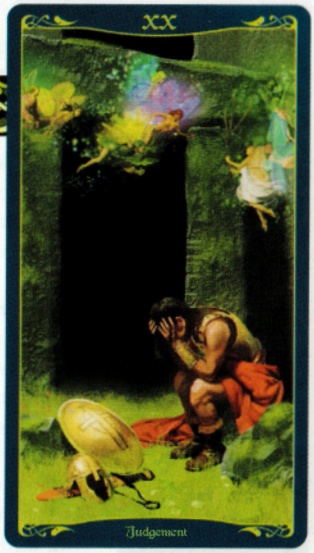
Questions to Ask

What deserves my attention today? What should I celebrate? What plan should I activate?

In what ways am I brilliant, confident, victorious, or capable?

How can I be confident without overstating my abilities or misrepresenting my achievements?

xx. Judgement



Keywords
Evaluation and Experience

Creator's Commentary
For decades, many versions of the Judgement card have depicted a scene from the Christian myth of the rapture. Gabriel's trumpet wakes the dead, who rise from their graves, don new and eternal spiritual bodies, and streak into the sky to face a final judgement. For anyone who attended Sunday school, the routine is familiar: sheep on the right, goats on the left, with the righteous bound for Heaven and the wicked bound for Hell.

Though the Christian symbolism has persisted, modern Tarot readers tend to focus on more generic readings of the card, preferring to emphasize the themes of attaining transformative insight, being summoned unexpectedly, or reinventing the self to meet new challenges. Perhaps due to the title of the card, the themes of being evaluated or rendering a verdict are also popular.

Cabalistic teaching associates the Judgement card with the moment when we break free from what Jason Lotterhand called "the 3D reality" and realize we are totally and completely free. As a result of this transformative experience, we shatter the illusions of space and time and achieve new insights into the nature of our existence.

In the mythic world of the Celtic fairies, this process is reflected in the story of Oisin, a human warrior who followed the fairy folk into the realm of the Underworld. There, he joined the fairies for a period of hunting, dancing, and feasting ... but upon his return to the human realm, he found 300 years had passed. Like the American Rip van Winkle, he discovered his family and friends were long gone.

Like the figures in the traditional Judgement card, Oisin rises from the Underworld to face a new reality.

But his story is also a warning: becoming someone new requires leaving your former Self behind.

Important Symbols

Oisin. When Oisin descended into the Underworld, he neglected to consider the consequences of his actions. As a result, he becomes a symbol for unthinking action and the need to exercise sound judgement. How well have you thought through the consequences of your own decisions and choices?

The Fairy Procession. Though their playful mood and bright colors make them appealing to humans, fairy processionals are inherently dangerous. Humans who stumble on them may be subject to attack, or – perhaps worse – the human in question may be caught up in the processional, ushered into the Underworld, and never seen again. As a symbol, the procession represents anything we do or believe without thinking about it, from bad habits to religious beliefs.

The Portal. This entrance to the Underworld is a symbol for commitment. Before crossing over, you have choices; once committed, you are subject to its realities, no matter how bizarre.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, the time has come to examine your actions and beliefs. What unthinking habits could be sabotaging your growth? What unthinking beliefs limit your experience of the larger world?

When it comes to your own life, are you, like Oisin, acting without thinking … or are you striving for consciousness? Consider this card a wake-up call. It's time to question your assumptions and consider how today's choices are shaping your tomorrows.

Questions to Ask

What beliefs am I unwilling to question? What actions do I take strictly out of habit?

In your current situation, are you past the point of no return?

Who needs a wake up call? What is the subject of it?

XXI. World

Keywords
Wholeness and Completeness

Creator's Commentary
Samhain means "summer's end." It marks the transition from the "light half" of the year to the "dark half," and the beginning of the harvest time. The holiday, celebrated with bonfires and three-day feasts, came to be associated with The Festival of the Dead, when locals left places at their tables for deceased family members and families recalled ancestors with stories and songs. In many modern Western cultures, Samhain has come to be called "Halloween."

On the night of Samhain, the veil between this world and the Underworld grows thin, and spirits of every sort pass easily from one world to the other. This fusion of worlds also produces an excellent climate for divinatory practices. Readings of all kinds (from the ancient practice of seeing a spouse's initials in discarded apple peels to the modern practice of reading Tarot cards) are believed to possess more depth and accuracy on this night.

This is also the night when the fairies hold their largest (and, therefore, most dangerous) processional. The celebration lasts throughout the night, growing wilder and more mischievous the longer it goes on. Though Samhain falls in the final quarter of the modern year, it has long been considered the "Celtic New Year," a night that marks the completion of one cycle and the beginning of the next.

It is fitting, then, to see a Samhain procession on the World trump. The World is a card about having it all, about achieving wholeness, about completion. But within that wholeness lie the seeds of the next cycle; having attained the World, we acquire what we need to equip our inner Fool … and begin our journey again.

And so, the fairies beckon, encouraging you to join their parade. The question is: are you willing to trade one World for the next?

Important Symbols

The Fairy Community. The seasonal processional is filled with fairies of every stripe – no self-respecting fairy would dare miss it. The few fairies we see on this card are symbols for the entire fairy community ... and, by extension, for the concept of unity, togetherness, and wholeness.

The New Year. Samhain marks the end of one year and the beginning of the next. The World trump marks the end of the Trump cycle and the potential for return to the innocence and inexperience of the Fool. Symbolically, both point to those moments which combine endings and beginnings, closure and opportunity.

Inhuman Qualities. Though it is tempting to project human qualities onto these (occasionally) humanoid creatures, it is important to remember that the fairies are a race unto themselves, with goals and motivations we cannot understand. Once we adopt the secret teachings of the Tarot, we undergo a transformation that changes us completely. How are those around you likely to respond if your own study accelerates your spiritual evolution?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's likely that you are on the verge of an important achievement. It's also possible that you are on the threshold of a radical phase of self-reinvention, or that you, in one way or another, have gone as far as you can go in your present pursuit. Savor this moment of wholeness ... but recognize that new goals and new directions will shortly be called for.

Questions to Ask

What has been completed? What lies ahead?
In what ways do I already have everything I need?
What do I lack in order to feel whole? What does this desire say about me?

The Minor Arcana

The Majors or trumps reflect broad themes, power spiritual or psychological forces, or "the Hand of God" at work in our lives.

By contrast, the Minor Arcana (the "lesser mysteries") are associated with more mundane matters. Each card tends to be associated with the activities, emotions, challenges, and trials we face on a daily basis. As a result, the minors strike many students of the Tarot as much more approachable than the Majors.

The Suits

Traditional Tarot decks are divided into four suits, representing four different perspectives on every day life:

- ***Wands***, associated with the element of Fire and the qualities of desire, passion, and intention;
- ***Cups*** or ***Chalices***, associated with the element of Water and the qualities of reflection and emotion;
- ***Swords***, associated with the element of Air and the qualities of communication and cognition;
- ***Coins*** or ***Pentacles***, associated with the element of Earth and the qualities of sensation and possession.

When I began my research for the Celtic Fairy Tarot, you can imagine how excited I was to discover that the fairy folk hold four sacred objects in particularly high regard:

- The ***Spear of Lug***. Lug is a fiery sun god and fierce warrior.
- The ***Cauldron of Dagda***. This inexhaustible cauldron produces a liquor capable of restoring life.
- The ***Sword of Nuada***. This sword is considered infallible; it always strikes true.
- The ***Lia Fail***, or ***Stone of Destiny***. When touched by a true king, the stone roars.

Synchronicity! The four suits and four sacred objects struck me as remarkably parallel … so I decided to use the four sacred objects as the suit markers in the Celtic Fairy Tarot.

Spears or Wands

Cauldrons or Cups

As a result:

Spears = Wands
Cauldrons = Cups
Swords = Swords
Stones = Coins

The Numbered Cards

Contained within each suit are 10 numbered cards (Ace - 10). The numerical assignments are not arbitrary. Instead, they are deeply symbolic. Knowing just a little about the numerological symbolism at work in the Minors will make reading and interpreting the Celtic Fairy Tarot (and any other Tarot deck, for that matter) much easier.

- ***One/Ace.*** The number one is associated with unity and focus.
- ***Two.*** Two symbolizes duality and debate.
- ***Three.*** Three is associated with discussion and evaluation.
- ***Four.*** Four is a stable number – a symbol for stability and solidarity (and even stagnation!).
- ***Five.*** The number five is the number of instability and conflict.
- ***Six.*** Six represents collaboration and cooperation.
- ***Seven.*** Seven is associated with imagination and inner thoughts.
- ***Eight.*** Eight is a symbol for effort and physical work.
- ***Nine.*** Nine represents fullness or completion.
- ***Ten.*** Ten is associated with staleness, exhaustion, and the need for revitalization.

The Court Cards

Each suit also contains four court cards or people cards:

- ***The Page.*** Pages are enthusiastic beginners, inexperienced but eager.
- ***The Knight.*** Knights represent action – usually action taken to one extreme or another.
- ***The Queen.*** Queens represent reflection, introspection, and collaboration.
- ***The King.*** Kings are symbols of authority and control.

Swords

Interpreting a Minor Card

The easiest way to interpret a minor card is to combine the meaning of its suit with the symbolic meaning of its number and rank. For example:

Eight is the number of physical effort and work. Stones is the suit of sensation and possession. The Eight of Stones, then is a card associated with the sensation of work ... or a physical effort to gain a treasured possession.

Kings are associated with authority and control. Cauldrons are associated with emotion and reflection.

The King of Cauldrons, then, symbolizes a person who seeks to control emotions (his, hers, or those of others), or a person whose thoughts and reflections on the issue at hand are considered authoritative.

If this system is difficult for you, don't worry. The illustration on each card tells a story, and the story is keyed to the symbolic meaning of the card. If you don't want to look up the meaning of a card, just concentrate on the image, make up a story, and then apply the insights from that story to your situation.

Stones or Coins

Maps, like the one above, had been created by the artist in order to have a better understanding of all the cards in a certain Suit.

Ace of Cauldrons

Keywords
Feeling and Emotion

Creator's Commentary
Called "Cups" in a more traditional deck, the suit of Cauldrons is associated with emotions, motivations, and our sense of Spirit. Featured on the Ace is Dagda's inexhaustible cauldron, the source of a potion capable of bringing the dead back to life.

As a symbol, this sacred fairy relic fuses emotion and spirituality with the restoration of life. It is also important to note the cauldron's inexhaustible quality, which suggests that both the heart and Spirit have no limitations. The cauldron reminds us that love and faith are renewable resources; the more we give, the more we receive.

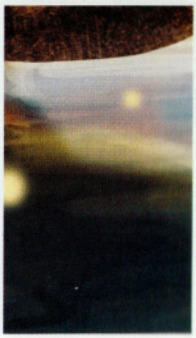
I've placed the cauldron on the lip of a vast sea. This is partially to remind the reader of the suit's association with the element of water, but also to suggest a connection to the vast collective subconscious shared by humans and fairies alike – a reservoir fueling everything from profound mystical experience to simple inspiration.

Important Symbols

The cauldron. The contents of the cauldron can never be completely consumed; as they are ladled out, the container magically refills itself. This is the nature of both love and spirit, which are paradoxically replenished by giving them away.

The sea. The sea suggests both the subconscious mind, but also our craving for adventure and insight.

The ouroboros. The cauldron features this classic symbol for infinite reinvention: a snake swallowing its own tail.



Interpreting the Card

The Ace of Cauldrons signals an opportunity to be baptized in the healing waters of love and faith. It points to a time of renewal, and suggests the need to get back in touch with the people and things we love and believe in.

If you've drawn this card, let it serve as a reminder to celebrate whatever sustains and inspires you ... and let it be an invitation to share your passion with the world.

Questions to Ask

How freely do I give my love? How guarded am I in matters of faith? How well are these attitudes serving my larger goals?

What inspires me? How can I replenish my source of inspiration?

What deep motivations are at work in my life? My art? My faith?

Two of Cauldrons

Keywords

Attraction and Affection

Creator's Commentary

In the Waite-Smith version of this card, we see to lovers sharing a toast. As they gaze lovingly into each others' eyes, a fiery angel appears, bearing the caduceus, an ancient symbol for healing and renewal. We are quick to equate this card with the arrival of romance ... but its message may have more to do with the restorative power of a pure, sincere, emotional connection.

Here, a masculine fairy brings a gift of water

to a feminine spirit. As he hovers, a bit of water spills over the sides of the walnut shell; he is unconcerned, though, because he knows the Source of this gift is inexhaustible.

His partner, charmed by the gift, waits for him to move closer – sharing his emotion by reflecting on it. As their eyes meet, the world around them seems to fall away, and they are lost in a celebration of the connection they share.

Important Symbols

Masculinity. Here, the qualities of desire and action echo traditional gender assignments – but this energy may be expressed in any one of any gender. The masculine fairy represents the desire for connection and the willingness to pursue it.

Femininity. Reflection and receptivity are traditionally female traits – but, once again, this energy may find a home in bodies of any gender. The female fairy represents a willingness to be open, receptive, and introspective.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's time to consider the role that connections play in your life, relationships, and work. How important are simple human connections to you? How much emphasis do you place on them? And to what extent do your actions reflect the value you place on these connections?

The card also suggests a strategy: being open to the needs of others ... and then taking action to fulfill those needs.

Questions to Ask

What qualities attract me? Do I possess – or lack – those qualities?

What do I need from someone in order to feel a sense of connection? How much of that sense of connection am I responsible for?

How open am I to the affection and love of others?

Three of Cauldrons

Keywords
Gratitude and Celebration

Creator's Commentary
The Waite-Smith deck depicts three celebrating women engaged in a harvest dance. Here, we see three fairies celebrating a harvest of grapes – but each celebrates in his or her own way.

This card pairs the active energy of the number three with the more passive, emotional energy of the suit of Cauldrons. The result is a card about emotions that prompt action, and, like others before me, I've chosen to represent this with a celebration. It's worth noting, though, that celebration isn't the only action driven by emotion.

Take, for example, the unconscious clurichaun. There's no question about what he's been doing. But what emotions motivated his overindulgence? Was he drinking to remember – or drinking to forget? Either way, his lack of self-control hints at a larger problem: a lack of gratitude. Those who appreciate what they have can savor the smallest sample – while gluttons, driven by greed, will never be satisfied.

Important Symbols

Vat of grapes. The grape synthesizes light, air, and water into an exquisite vintage – the year in liquid form. Because of its propensity to "make the heart glad," the wine produced from grapes has been associated with celebration for centuries.

Emotion and Action. Strong motions can drive pure expression (the mid-air dance), work (the making of wine), or exhaustion (the sleeping clurichaun). With which fairy do you have the most in common?

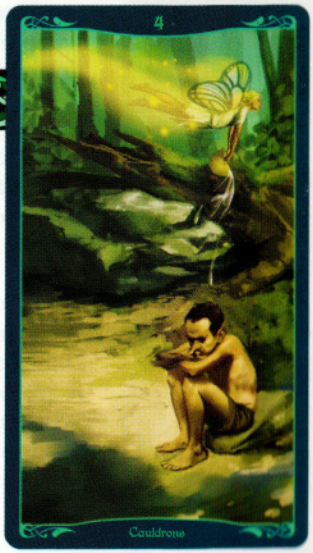
Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, the time has come to celebrate or express gratitude for someone or something in your life. Rather than dash from A to B, take some time to consider where you are ... what you have ... and how much you have to be thankful for.
Celebrate every harvest – but also pause to consider the season. Should this season's celebration be a time for dance ... for work ... or for repose?

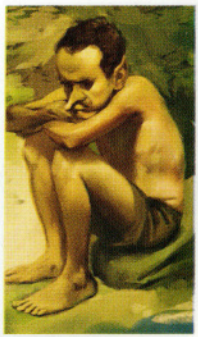
Questions to Ask
What do I have to celebrate? What blessings have I overlooked?
How do I express joy? Am I spontaneous? Deliberate? Exhausted?
How is my work an expression of joy? How often does joy motivate me to work?
How can I show my gratitude for what I've been given?

Four of Cauldrons

Keywords
Boredom and Malaise

Creator's Commentary
The four of Cauldrons combines the stability of the four with the emotional energy of the suit of Cauldrons, producing a card about emotional stability.
Here, following the lead of the Waite-Smith deck, I've chosen to illustrate the darker side of this combination, dreaming up a pixie who suffers from emotional stagnation. Try as he might, he cannot shake his malaise; as a result, he spends his days sulking and fretting.





Floating above him is another fairy embodying the same energy in a different way. Her ruthless cheerfulness is expressed here as mischief; she is so intent on maintaining her own amusement, she is no longer able to empathize with the victims of her pranks.

Eventually, that cascade of icy water is going to shatter the moment. Our depressed friend will have a new reality to contend with … and, most likely, so will our prankster.

Important Symbols

The posture of depression. The sulking pixie has adopted a posture designed to maintain and reinforce his feelings of detachment and despair. What actions might you take to perpetuate what you're feeling? What actions would challenge or change your emotional state?

The unthinking action. The flying fairy takes action without thinking of consequences? To what extent might you be acting without thinking? How can you break the cycle and stop going through the motions?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, someone in the situation needs to undergo a change of attitude. A sulker may need to count his or her blessings … or a fiercely enthusiastic cheerleader may need to consider the value of quiet reflection.

Different situations call for different emotional strategies. You can avoid both boredom and malaise by opening yourself to the moment … and allowing Spirit to lead you to an appropriate, healthy emotional response.

Questions to Ask

What am I feeling? How long have I been feeling this? Is this feeling appropriate for the moment – or left over from the past?

What attitudes need changing? How can they be changed? What action can I take to break the bonds of emotional inertia that bind me?

Five of Caludrons

Keywords
Loss and Regret

Creator's Commentary
The stability of the Four has been disturbed, and now we find ourselves in the chaos of the five. This upheaval, paired with the emotional themes of the suit of Cauldrons, produces a dark and heavy card – the embodiment of loss and regret.
We see here a fairy caught up in the past – so deeply attached to what was, she has lost sight of what is or what can be. Now, she sits, dejected, beside a grave – the ultimate symbol of loss.
Her grief is so sharp and so overwhelming that she cannot see or appreciate the miracle taking place right before her eyes. This is especially tragic, since the appearance of this unusual blossom is very likely a gesture from beyond, intended to ease her weary sprit.
Grief is natural, and everyone has regrets. Embracing this frees us to participate in sadness fully … without sacrificing our love for life.

Important Symbols
The graveyard. Almost every faith includes the idea of life after death. As a result, the graveyard becomes a complex symbol. Do you see it as an unavoidable final destination … a place to mourn losses … or a way station to greater things?
The black rose. As if by magic, this single black rose appears. What events and situations in your life could represent gestures or communications from lost loved ones? How might grief be blinding you to miracles?

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, the time has come to deal with the strong emotions of grief and loss.

Pausing to reflect on "the good old days" is healthy; obsessing on what has been lost is a formula for disaster. If we are too focused on looking back – if we making mourning our losses into a habit – we will miss the magic at work in the present.
How can you let go … and move on?

Questions to Ask
What have I lost? How might that loss be a blessing in disguise?
Is anything ever really lost? How might loss give way to new energy and new growth?
What do you regret? How do you deal with that regret? How might regret become a motivator for positive action?

Six of Cauldrons

Keywords
Gestures and Partnership

Creator's Commentary
Throughout Ireland and Scotland, sources agree: fairies are drawn to milk. As a result, those wishing to attract good luck and protection often place a pan of fresh milk outside the door at sunset, hoping this gesture will earn them the affection and blessing of a grateful fairy friend.
Here, as the sun sets, two fairies wait for the cover of darkness to descend before taking advantage of a farmer's offering. There is a

sense of familiarity and ritual here; this is not the first time the offering has been made, nor is this the first time these fairies have taken advantage of it.

By giving a portion of his profits back to the fairies, the farmer secures the safety of his crops and the fertility of the fields. By embracing this gesture, the fairies obligate themselves to remain on site. Because everyone cooperates, everyone benefits.

Important Symbols

The pan of milk. Mystics insist the fairies drink the milk; pragmatists prefer to find local cats responsible. The point, though, is not who drinks the offering – but the mindset of gratitude and cooperation that motivates the offering in the first place.

The unseen fairies. The farmer may not see the fairies, but he is certain enough of their presence to engage in the age-old ritual of providing milk for them. What role does faith play in ritual?

Interpreting the Card

Six is the number of cooperation and collaboration; Cauldrons is the suit of emotion and spirit. Cooperation is in the air … but it's up to you to take advantage of it.

You will have an easier time finding allies if you pause to ask, "What do my potential allies need?" Putting their needs first will go a long way toward building useful partnerships.

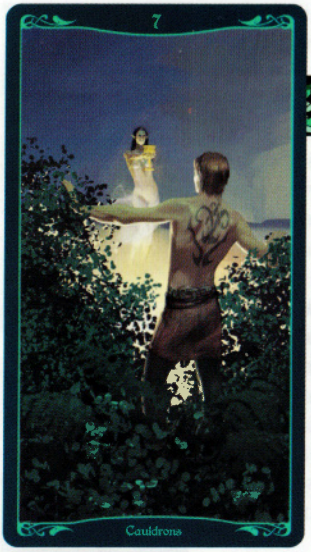
Manipulation – serving others with your own needs in mind – won't work. Genuine service, though, produces remarkable results.

Questions to Ask

What sacrifices can I make? What services can I render to others?

How can I find allies? What can I do to prove myself a worthy ally?

What rituals am I ignoring? How can you become more involved in the rituals of your community?



Seven of Cauldrons

Keywords
Delusions and Dreams

Creator's Commentary
Imagine, for a moment, that you are a lonesome Celtic warrior, making your way through the bog at night. Up ahead, bright light – a torch? an enemy campfire? – draws your attention. You part the reeds ... and there, bathed in a brilliant glow, is the woman you have always dreamed of meeting. She smiles. She beckons. She offers you a golden cup of warm, sweet wine.

At this point, even the bravest of warriors would do well to run away, for the woman in this tale is, in fact, a watershee – a vicious creature with a taste for human souls. She hovers above the water, lures in her prey with the sweetest of songs, and then drowns them in the lake beneath her feet. Beneath the surface of the water, she sucks out their last breath, consuming their spirit and tossing their bodies aside.

Important Symbols
The watershee. The watershee reminds us that appearances are deceiving. Not everything that strikes us as desirable (at first) is good for us. Before taking advantage of any offer, we should pause to ask, "Is this too good to be true?".

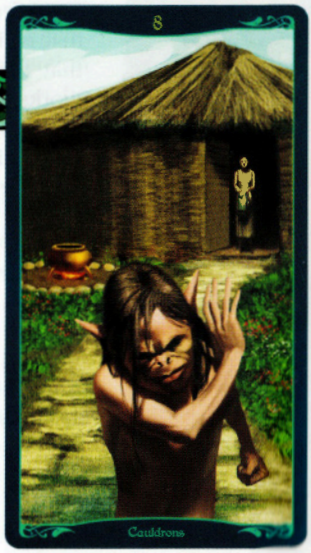
Dreams vs. delusions. This card has long been associated with dreams and delusions. One inspires; the other destroys. Wise warriors pay heed to this subtle distinction. Are you dreaming ... or deluded?

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, you are most likely in the throes of desire. Life offers us an endless parade of diversions. It's your job to decide which of these are

worthy of your time and attention ... and which should be avoided.
Rather than be drawn to every pleasant pastime, perhaps you should be asking, "Does this activity carry me closer to – or farther away from – my ultimate goal?".

Questions to Ask
What do I really want? How can I be sure this opportunity is a good one?
How closely is this opportunity aligned with my personal goals?
What is the difference between dreams and delusions?
How can I know for sure the difference between unexpected inspiration ... and delusion?

Eight of Cauldrons



Keywords
Dissatisfaction and Departure

Creator's Commentary
The hard-working brownie is remarkable in the fairy kingdom, acting as a dedicated housekeeper, farmhand, and servant. Without any compensation, the brownie will draw water, build fires, sweep floors, and cook meals. Its greatest joy, it seems, comes from performing chores.
There's just one issue: brownies loathe clothing, preferring to work in the nude. It is one thing to have a brownie washing your

windows and weeding the garden; it is quite another to have it doing so naked.

To be so bold, brownies are infamously sensitive about their spindly bodies, and they will take any offer of clothing as a personal insult. As the housewife in this illustration has learned – too late – offering a brownie a suit of clothes will prompt a tantrum and a swift departure.

As dishes pile up and weeds take over the garden, perhaps our housewife will realize that a little fairy nudity wasn't such a bad thing after all.

Important Symbols

The Brownie's Departure. The brownie works tirelessly, without pay, until offended by the offer of clothing. What event, for you, becomes "the straw that broke the camel's back?"

The Offer of Clothing. The offer of clothing seems innocent enough, but has overtones for brownies that humans have difficulty understanding. Remember: the fact that we feel compelled to offer help does not mean that our help is wanted or needed.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you are likely in a situation that is no longer appealing to you. This may be a job that has grown stale, a relationship that no longer works, or a friendship that has become a burden.

The brownie's advice? Work faithfully … but if you are not getting what you need (or if you are only being offered rewards you do not want), perhaps a change of scenery is in order.

Questions to Ask

What satisfies me? What angers or upsets me? What actions drive me away?

How can I avoid being unintentionally offensive?

What will I gain by speaking up about my discomfort? What might I lose if I do? In the end, will my situation be better … or worse?

Nine of Cauldrons

Keywords
Satisfaction and Satiation

Creator's Commentary
Long before medical science gave us the term "cancer," Celtic people had a fanciful explanation for a number of illnesses that left victims weak and wasted: the influence of Alp Luachra.

When unsuspecting victims fall asleep near a stream, Alp Luachra climbs into their mouths, bringing along his pet newt. He then sets up residence in the unfortunate human's stomach, gobbling up every morsel of food that makes its way into the gullet. No matter how much the victim consumes, he or she eventually starves – because Alp Luachra leeches all the nutrition away.

Traditional versions of this card feature a plump, smiling merchant; something about his expression suggests his satisfaction may have come at some cost to others. Here, Alp Luachra becomes a symbol for satisfaction and satiation – but also a warning. Can we ever be truly satisfied when our satisfaction comes at a terrible price for others?

Important Symbols

Alp Luachra. With his bulging belly and grotesque smile, Alp Luachra is the embodiment of greed satisfied. How long, I wonder, will that satisfaction last? And will he ever get enough?

Starving in the Midst of Plenty. No matter how much the victim eats, he or she soon starves to death. How might some of your own extreme behaviors be driven by a need that remains unfulfilled?

Interpreting the Card
While the subject depicted here is dark and disturb-

ing, the theme of the card is positive: satisfaction. As an omen, the card suggests that you will get what you want.

That said: you might also consider how getting what you want will impact others. When you gain, who loses? To what extent does your prosperity come at someone else's expense?

If your satisfaction is innocent, enjoy it. But if it comes at too high a price – beware!

Questions to Ask

What would it take to really satisfy me? How can I get that? What will it cost me?

How might self-destructive behavior be driven by a craving that remains unsatisfied?

To what extent does my prosperity depend on cheating or abusing others? How do I deal with that reality?

Ten of Cauldrons

Keywords

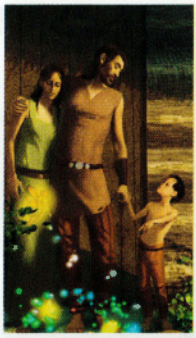
Home and Family

Creator's Commentary

A new home is always a time for celebration, and, in Celtic culture, that spirit of celebration extends to friends and influences in the fairy universe.

Here, a happy family celebrates the completion of a house they have built with the help of their community. As part of the festivities, they have elected to honor the fairy folk in the area by leaving customary offerings – fruit, food, bowls of milk, goblets of

wine – just outside the threshold. These delights have lured in an excited crowd of fairy folk, who dance, feast, and cavort in the midst of the spread.
The lesson? Joy lingers longest when it walks hand in hand with gratitude and generosity. The Ten of Cauldrons is a card about a fullness of spirit that wells up, spills over, and produces an inexhaustible flow of happiness in us … and in those around us.



Important Symbols
The Home. This home invites you to explore your own feelings about home. What emotions stir when you recall your childhood home? What attitudes and insights might your current home communicate?
The Happy Family. In modern times, our definition of family is changing, but even in Celtic times, that deep connection extended beyond genetic lines to include anyone regarded "part of the clan". Who is your family?
The Offering. How have you shown your gratitude lately?

Interpreting the Card
This card is a harbinger of joy, usually in connection with home and family. It suggests the supreme satisfaction associated with completing a major project, the bond that grows among those who share a goal, and the desire to give thanks for what has been received. While celebrating all the good things in your life, remember to come up with a way to show your appreciation for the abundance you've been allowed to share.

Questions to Ask
What does family mean to me? Who is my family? How has that definition changed over time?
How do I honor my family? My ancestors? The supportive forces and influences in the world around me? How does an attitude of gratitude change my experience of the world?

Page of Cauldrons

Keywords
Eagerness vs. Inexperience

Creator's Commentary
To the ignorant and inexperienced soul, everything looks easy.
When a skilled musician sits down at a piano, the music flows effortlessly from his fingers – or appears to, because we do not see the hours and hours of practice behind the performance. When an artist creates a picture with what, at first, seem to be almost random strokes of the brush or pen, the process looks simple enough – but that's because we cannot see the years of tireless effort invested in honing the artist's skills.
In Tarot, the Page is associated with inexperience, while the suit of Cauldrons (or Cups) is associated with emotion. Here, a young fairy's inexperience breeds the boldness to try a tricky maneuver; unfortunately, landing on the lip of a hot cauldron turns out to be more a matter of skill than confidence.
He'll be fine. In matters of spirit and emotion, we all get burned a bit when struggling to find our way.

Important Symbols
The bubbling cauldron. Here, the cauldron stands for bubbling emotions: a first romance, eagerness to prove one's worth, or uncertain feelings associated with encountering someone or something for the first time.
The teetering fairy. While the experience of teetering on the brink is uncomfortable, it is a prerequisite for growth. It's okay to feel unbalanced when trying or embracing something new. Rather than be put off by the feeling, embrace it as proof of progress.

Interpreting the Card

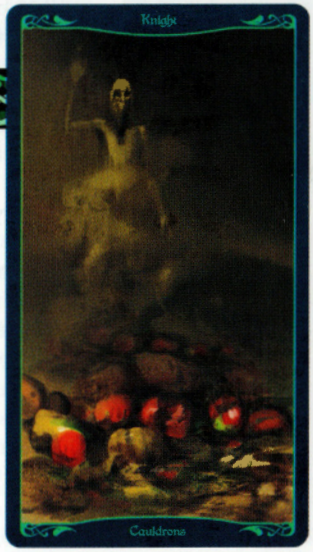
If you've drawn this card, chances are you've set out on some new spiritual or emotional quest. The Page of Cauldrons is your invitation to explore and embrace the uncertainty associated with trying something completely outside your comfort zone.

Is your heart pounding? Is your pulse quick? Are you frightened? Defensive? Be informed and cautious, but allow these emotions to flow in ... and flow through you. Find your center point ... and keep moving forward.

Questions to Ask

How often do I try new things? How willing am I to look foolish or clumsy in front of others? How do I respond when trying something for the very first time? How am I – spiritually or emotionally – a beginner? What spiritual or emotional situations make me feel awkward and vulnerable?

Knight of Cauldrons



Keywords

Delight vs. Depression

Creator's Commentary

In the Waite-Smith deck, the Knight of Cups stands somewhere between the crazy, headlong rush of the Knight of Swords and the land-locked, static pose of the Knight of Pentacles. While his horse lifts an uncertain foot, the Knight stares impassively at the Grail. The Quest is finally over. Is he delighted ... or depressed?

In the Celtic Fairy Tarot, the Knight is the mysterious Grey Man. A creature made en-

tirely of damp fog, he rises from the water to haunt coastal towns. He creeps through the city at night, souring milk, rotting vegetables, and giving the locals uneasy dreams.

He takes great joy in causing loss, but that joy is short-lived. When the sun rises, those golden rays slice through him like knives, dispelling his influence until the next foggy night. One has to wonder: when he sees the sun rise, is the Grey Man depressed .. or delighted?

Important Symbols

The Grey Man. The joy he takes in spoilage is also a metaphor for bipolar emotions: the highest highs, the lowest lows. He embodies the challenge suggested by this card: balancing strong and overpowering emotions.

The Rotten Fruit. Unless protected from the vagaries of emotion, the fruit of our labors is liable to spoil. Feelings come and go, like clouds. Focus, instead, on something constant: your work, whatever it is.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn the Knight of Cauldrons, you're being pulled between two opposing emotions. Perhaps you should feel happy; instead, you find yourself feeling low. Or perhaps you should be sorry ... and, instead, you feel a rush of satisfaction.

Don't debate what you "should" feel. Get in touch with true feelings. Until you embrace them, any joy will be spoiled – like the sweet fruit rotted by the passage of the Grey Man.

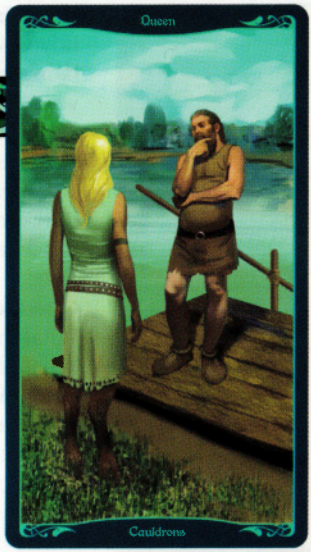
Questions to Ask

What should I feel? What do I really feel? How can I embrace my true feelings?

What secret is spoiling my ability to feel joy?

How well do I deal with extreme emotions? How well-insulated am I from transient emotions? How can I maintain balance?

Queen of Cauldrons



Keywords
Insight vs. Instinct

Creator's Commentary
Which do you trust more: information ... or your instincts?
That's the theme of the Queen of Cauldrons, a card illustrated with a fairy creature called a Glaistig. She appears as a human female, sometimes clothed in a simple white dress, sometimes wearing a green cloak. Her beauty diverts attention away from an unsettling fact: look down, and you'll see she has the woolly legs and cloven hooves of a goat.
The Glaistig tend to prey on ferrymen, using their beauty to charm him into a free ride across the river. Once on the opposite shore, the Glaistig turn on the ferrymen and devour them alive.
In this card, the ferryman can't help but see the beauty of this damsel in distress. Still – he hesitates, because his instincts tell him something isn't as it seems.
Want to avoid winding up in the Glaistig's gut? Listen to your own.

Important Symbols
The Glaistig. At first glance, the Glaistig appears innocent. She plays to our sexual urges, but also to our social conditioning: good people, we like to believe, lend a hand to those in need. Especially in the information age, we are encouraged to trust quantifiable information: numbers, data, observations. The Glaistig, as a symbol, reminds us there are other, equally-important ways of knowing.
Put information to good use ... but don't abandon your intuition.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn the Queen of Cauldrons, you are being asked to pay more attention to that wise little voice that comes from deep inside your soul.

The facts? They're vital. The numbers? You need them. But there is a part of you – a legacy, perhaps, from some earlier incarnation – that sorts things out more quickly than the conscious mind can follow. Your head and heart are important – but your gut is, too!

Questions to Ask

What information do I have? What feelings do I have? What conclusions do these two different ways of knowing suggest?

Which do you trust more: your head ... or your heart?

How comfortable are you with the idea of intuition? When has it served you well? When has it failed you?

King of Cauldrons

Keywords

Compassion vs. Caution

Creator's Commentary

Kings are cards about control; Cauldrons are the suit of emotion. Combine these, and you get the King of Cauldrons – a card about emotional control.

Illustrating this principle is Iubdan, the King of the Leprechauns. He is revered for his qualities of nobility and honesty (qualities which, we might note, distinguish him from the vast majority of his subjects!). Here, Iubdan listens to an appeal from a needy citizen

of the fairy kingdom. If controlled by greed, Iubdan might send her away. If overwhelmed by pity, he might hand over his fortune. But Iubdan, the embodiment of control, merges compassion with caution. Rather than silence his heart or exhaust his treasury, he responds with a gift that is perfectly scaled to the fairy's immediate need.

Every moment is a test – an opportunity to lose balance, to feel overwhelmed. Iubdan reminds us: avoid extremes, retain control … and be King.

Important Symbols

The Crown. The crown is a symbol of the mental and intellectual aspect of Iubdan, whose insights and wisdom temper the unstable emotional energy of the Suit of Cauldrons.

The Fairy in Need. Every moment presents a decision. If we make choices based on nothing but emotion, we may soon find our selves (and our reserves) exhausted. Information from the heart is important; remember to temper it with information from your head!

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn the King of Cauldrons, you may be facing a decision that calls for a unique blend of compassion and caution. Help if you can: lend money, give aid, volunteer. At the same time, don't let your emotional involvement move you to take actions that aren't in your own long-term interests.

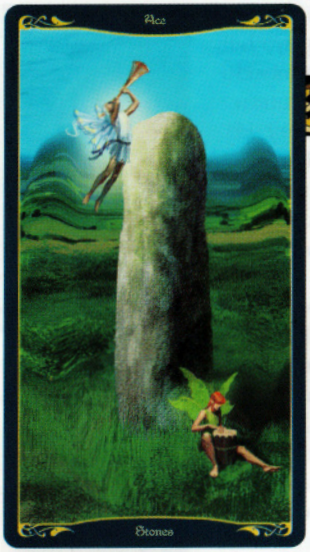
Consider the request. In granting it, are you really helping … or fostering dependency? Before taking action, consider the consequences.

Questions to Ask

What kind of help is needed? To what extent would my response be help … or a hindrance?

How can I assist without exhausting myself or my resources? To what extent are my contributions sustainable?

Which is better: giving someone a fish … or teaching someone to fish?



Ace of Stones

Keywords
Ownership and Empowerment

Creator's Commentary
The suit of Stones – called Pentacles or Coins in more traditional decks – is focused on practical and physical concerns: money, the body, and the material realm.

On the Ace, we see the Lia Fail, for the Stone of Destiny, one of the four holy relics of the Tuatha De Denann, or fairy folk. This blunt, phallic monolith rises from the crest of the Hill of Tara, where ancient Irish kings were crowned.

In the image, the air surrounding the Stone of Destiny is expanding outward, as though displaced by a wave of pure energy. This is a visual representation of this stone's most unique quality: when touched by a true King of Ireland, the stone emits an ear-splitting roar – undeniable evidence of the candidate's authority.

As the Ace of Stones, the Stone of Destiny presents you with an opportunity to step forward, establish your authority, and boldly claim what already belongs to you.

Important Symbols
The Stone of Destiny. Ancient lore is full of tests designed to reveal the authority or suitability of those being tested. Excalibur could only be pulled from the stone by a true king, and the Stone of Destiny refuses to roar for anyone other than the rightful king of Ireland.

Interpreting the Card
The Ace of Stones indicates you have an opportunity to claim or take possession of an item or state of being. It should be taken as proof that you are well-posi-

tioned to buy or sell a physical object ... or that you are on the verge of achieving a physical goal (like losing weight or arriving at a destination).
Everything you want is yours. Are you bold enough to claim it?

Questions to Ask
What physical evidence of my own authority exists? What physical evidence can those who position themselves as authorities present to prove their claims of superiority and skill?
If you were bold as a King of Ireland, what might you claim as your own? How can you become bold or worthy enough to claim what is already yours by birthright?

Two of Stones

Keywords
Options and Alternatives

Creator's Commentary
Decisions, decisions.
After the end of October, it is generally accepted that any berries remaining on the vine are the exclusive property of the fairy folk. Humans who go berry-picking in November will likely be poisoned.
Here, a human child stumbles on a berry-laden vine. Unfortunately, October has come and gone, and these sweet treats are no longer considered up for grabs. A fairy ap-

pears, shaking a finger and warning the child away. The berries look so sweet and ripe ... but conventional wisdom says this is literally "forbidden fruit." Are you the sort of child who will honor the customs and traditions of your people ... or will you shrug them off, pick the berries, and satisfy your short-term goals? The Two of Stones is a metaphor for choice – and choice, in the end, is really just an indicator of what we truly value.

Important Symbols

The berries. Confronted by something you crave, how easy would it be for you to set desire aside and wait for a more appropriate time? How open are you to "delayed gratification?"

The fairy warning. Warnings and restrictions encoded in old myths and stories were once the primary way a culture communicated its values. What does traditional wisdom have to say about your course of action? Will you embrace that wisdom ... or ignore it?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you face a choice between equally attractive options. The key to making the choice wisely? Being in tune with what you truly value. If you place value on tradition, you may wish to make a conservative choice. If you value innovation, you may through caution to the wind.

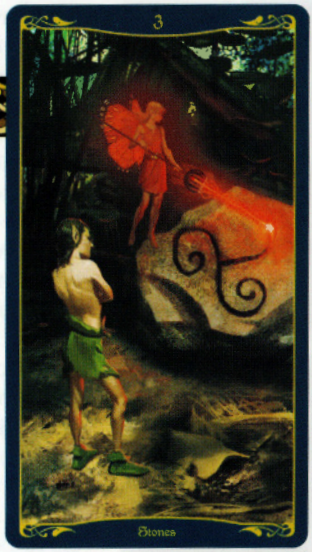
The choice is yours to make. Just remember: your choices define you. What will this decision say about you?

Questions to Ask

What do I claim to value most? To what extent are my actions in alignment with the values I espouse?

How do you assign value? What makes something valuable? Does that value remain constant, or does it change over time?

Three of Stones



Keywords
Effort and Approval

Creator's Commentary
Those schooled in the wisdom of the Waite-Smith deck will be used to seeing three figures on this card: a craftsman consulting with two customers. It's a fine illustration for the Three of Stones, given that three is the number of expression, and Stones is a suit associated with physical labor. Looking at Pixie Smith's illustration, we get the impression that two clients have come to review the work the craftsman is performing as part of a contract.

Here, we see a fairy artist committing a familiar Celtic triple-spiral to stone. As she carves the pattern in the rock, another fairy looks on, evaluating the quality of her craftsmanship.

The script called for one fairy worker and two fairy critics; for reasons of composition, in early versions of this card, the artist reduced the number of onlookers to one. The message, though, remains: the completion of any work invites the critique of others.

Important Symbols
The artist. The artist knows that his or work has been commissioned, and is well aware that the fruits of her labors will be compared, contrasted, and critiqued by others. These realities, however, must not be allowed to compromise the artist's vision. A true artist always places the greatest value on his or her own insights. Playing to the audience is nothing more than pandering.

The critic. Everyone has an opinion, but a well-informed opinion should carry more weight and authority than others.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn the Three of Stones, you're in one of two situations:

– You are being called on to critique others – their work, their value, their worth, or their physical qualities.

– You are being evaluated by critics, friends, employers, or teachers who may or may not understand who you are and what you value.

Whatever the situation, strive for objectivity. Receive criticism with an open mind, and dole it out with grace and caution.

Questions to Ask

What should the basis of my criticism be? What makes something good or bad, satisfactory or unsatisfactory? Who controls the criteria?

How do I offer criticism? How do I respond to it? How open am I to critique? How receptive do I expect others to be?

Four of Stones

Keywords

Protection and Prohibition

Creator's Commentary

The Lunantishee guards blackthorn shrubs on Samhain, prohibiting humans from cutting limbs. Should anyone ignore her fiercely protective display, she will attack, hurling stones with each of her four arms and shredding flesh with her razor-sharp talons and teeth.

The Lunantishee sounds like an unpleasant creature, but, in the end, she is simply performing the work she's been appointed to

do. She is the guardian of a sacred commodity; it's her role to threaten those who refuse to honor the old traditions. Back away from the blackthorn bush, and the Lunantishee won't bother you a bit.

In the meantime, she raises good questions. What do you really value? Which of your possessions deserves protection? What are you willing to fight for?

Pondering questions like these does more than identify your most treasured knick-knacks. When you identify what you're willing to fight for, you gain valuable insight into the person you really are.

Important Symbols

The Lunantishee. This odd fairy creature is a metaphor for possessiveness and the willingness to guard whatever we value. What might happen if you brought her single-minded focus to the protection of your time, talent, or creative output?

The blackthorn bush. All this energy expended ... defending a bush? Others may or may not share the value you place on your time, talent, or work – but your willingness to defend these things sends a message about their value.

Interpreting the Card

What are you willing to fight for? Your home? Your habits? Your art? Your soul? Your health?

Four is the number of stability; Stones is the suit of practical and material concerns. What you choose to preserve (to keep stable) says a great deal about your value system. The possessions you protect with all your might provide good insight into who you really are.

Questions to Ask

What do you value most? What physical evidence could be offered as proof of the value you assign this possession or person?

What boundaries do you draw? What lines must not be crossed? What value system informs these prohibitions? Who can break them, and under what circumstances?

Five of Stones

Keywords
Waste and Neglect

Creator's Commentary
Two women stand in a circle of stones. One is beautiful, with sleek hair and a healthy body. The other is her distorted, corrupted twin – a changeling, wasting away as it comes to the end of its life.

In some stories, when fairies leave a changeling as a replacement for a human child, the substitution is obvious. In others, though, the changeling mimics the original so perfectly that, at first, parents and friends will remain blissfully unaware that an exchange has been made.

The truth comes out slowly, over time. Changelings cannot hold their shape indefinitely, and, over time, their carefully-constructed facade begins to crumble. Fair hair turns gray, plump skin grows gaunt, and graceful features sag, causing the impostor to look more diseased and sickly with every passing day.

No matter how well-tended the creature may be, eventually, the changeling wastes away.

Important Symbols

Corruption. Physical beauty and monetary value may both be eroded over time. Entropy reminds us to invest the most value in incorruptible things – like character or integrity. When other investments crumble, we retain possession of who we really are.

Imitation. Go for what you really want. Settling for less – accepting a pale imitation or compromising your standards of quality – is a sure formula for bitterness and dissatisfaction.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn the Five of Stones, you've come face to face with an unexpected fluctuation in something you value:

– A treasured possession is worth less than you thought

– A person proves to be less of a friend that you believed

– A stable relationship has begun to decay

– Your body is not responding to exercise, care, or treatment.

Outcomes are disappointing you, and results are falling short. It's time to reassess your goals.

Questions to Ask

How do my results compare to what I expected? What caused the difference? How much control do I have over this difference? What factors are involved?

Is the change in perceived value the result of an actual decline in quality or worth – or a sign of how much you've changed?

Six of Stones

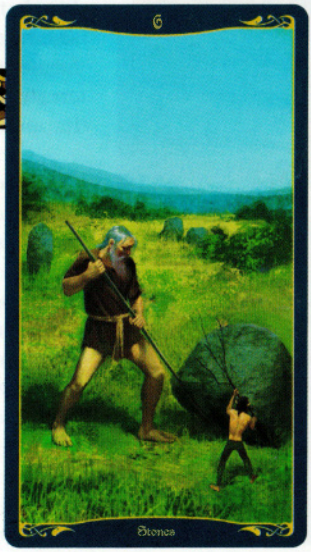
Keywords

Aid and Assistance

Creator's Commentary

In the middle of a hilly green pasture, we see a huge, moss-covered boulder.

A farmer – an older man, with flowing hair – is attempting to move the boulder himself by using a wooden staff as a lever. In his work, he is joined by a tiny brownie. The brownie inserts his own walking stick under the boulder, pulling down. As a result of their combined effort, one edge of the boulder begins to rise.



Sometimes, we all need help. Embracing this sentiment is not an admission of weakness; instead, it's the acceptance of a powerful truth. Whatever our skill, we may lack the time, energy, or resources needed to complete the task at hand. When this is the case, the contributions of others – even the smallest ones! – can make all the difference in our level of success. Collaboration and cooperation will greatly enhance your chances for success.

Important Symbols

The farmer. Though thick-bodied and strong, the farmer lacks the strength to achieve this task on his own. In order to benefit from the assistance of others, we must be humble enough to accept their offers of aid.

The brownie. Though small, his extra effort is all that's needed to achieve the farmer's goal. Sometimes, those we believe least capable are best positioned to give us the help we really need.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's time to think about your attitudes toward aid and assistance. How freely do you offer aid? How graciously do you offer assistance?

It's also important to note that a brownie's offer of assistance is usually spontaneous; it's doubtful that the farmer has asked the brownie to help. Instead, the creature saw an opportunity and took it. What might happen if you were to do the same?

Questions to Ask

How freely do you offer aid and assistance to others? How freely do you accept the aid and assistance others offer you?

What small contribution would have a big impact? What small offer of aid would give great comfort or assistance to others?

Seven of Stones

Keywords
Outcomes and Impacts

Creator's Commentary
For every action, there is a reaction; for every choice, there are consequences. Here, a young human boy has made a sport of throwing stones at fairies. One fairy lies sprawled on the ground, crushed by a rock. Another, sword drawn, is poised for attack. The young man is still armed … but the element of surprise has been exhausted, and one fist-sized rock is unlikely to defend him against the wrath of the fairy people.

While generally immortal, fairies can die violent deaths as a result of accidents or battle. But should a human cause that death, the consequences can be dramatic, painful, and quick.

The scene invites us to consider the impact our actions have on our environment. Often we can take ill-advised actions (from cheating on diets to poisoning the air) with little or no immediate impact. Eventually, though, our actions may add up to a new reality that no amount of regret can reverse.

Important Symbols
The thrown stone. A physical action has been taken, yielding a physical result. No amount of regret will turn back the clock; the only thing to do now is watch and see how the consequences play out.

The angry survivor. When in the wrong, we may apologize … but those apologies do not always absolve us from the consequences of our behavior.

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, the situation likely involves an unthinking action that has yielded unin-

tended consequences. These consequences are unpleasant, and the pressure is on to avoid them if at all possible.

Unfortunately, avoidance may not be possible. Once certain things are done – once the world reflects our actions – they cannot be undone ... and all that remains is accepting that things are different.

You must accept this new reality before you can move on.

Questions to Ask

What did I do? What was done to me? How has the world changed as a result? What are the physical signs of that change?

What can be done to make amends? What if nothing can be done? What if the only course of action is acceptance?

Eight of Stones

Keywords

Industry and Accomplishment

Creator's Commentary

On top of a large, smooth stone covered with green moss and Celtic etchings, a Leprechaun has set up his shoemaking factory. At one end of the long table, the Leprechaun is focused on his work: nailing a sole to a tiny booth. As he works, he smokes his pipe, lost in the simple pleasure of doing something he does well.

Along the length of his table are other pairs of shoes and boots: testimonies to the work

he's completed before our arrival. These physical products prove the Leprechaun's skill and are signs of his industry. They represent more than a good day's work, because they are, in many ways, external, visible manifestations of his internal, invisible talents.

This card celebrates work, and the simple joy of a job well-done. Rather than poke along half-heartedly, why not embrace the work that remains to be done ... and complete it with joy?

Important Symbols

The Leprechaun. With their skills and responsible work ethic, the Leprechauns represent any talented worker or skilled craftsperson.

The shoes. Shoes, here, are a metaphor for success. The finished shoes and boots testify to the skill of the artist; they are the proof customers need before plopping down their money.

Joy in work. Attitude can transform drudgery into delight. What goals could you achieve more quickly if you elected to love what you do?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, the time has come to consider the value of work. There is an implication that something has been done half-heartedly that could have been done well – and a suggestion that someone has forgotten the simple joy associated with a job well done.

On the other hand, the card may also be taken as a strategy: buckle down, gather your tools, and crank out some products – before time runs out!

Questions to Ask

What work do I love doing? What work do I hate doing? What role does my attitude play in each case? How might a shift in my attitude help me love tasks I normally avoid?

What proof do I have that I'm a good worker? What evidence can I use to convince others of the quality of what I have to offer?

Nine of Stones

Keywords
Mastery and Discipline

Creator's Commentary
Pixie Smith's illustration for the Nine of Pentacles is one of my favorite images in the Waite-Smith deck: a wealthy woman exuding confidence in the midst of an elegant garden.

Distracted by the hooded falcon, the lush grapes, and the business woman's fine robes, we may overlook the tiny snail creeping across the lower left-hand edge of the card. Once you see this tiny detail, though, it changes your perception of the card forever. As a symbol, the snail reminds us that true mastery and genuine confidence take time to achieve.

In the illustration for the Nine of Stones, we are in the same garden, but our perspective has shifted, and now, we have zoomed in for a closer look at the snail. At this magnification, we see it has a tiny master: an empowered female fairy warrior, ready to defend what her patron has achieved.

Important Symbols

The garden. Gardens and vineyards take time to bear fruit, requiring an investment of time and energy. Any worthwhile achievement must be nurtured! Are you addicted to quick results … or are you in this for the long haul?

The snail. From a human perspective, snails move slowly. How much faster would they appear to move if they were twice your size?

The fairy warrior. Anyone can make a contribution. Don't overlook potential allies because of their size.

Interpreting the Card

Our culture tends to associate confidence and achievement with externals. We expect heroes and warriors to look and act a certain way.

But real confidence and worthy achievements may not be obvious at first glance. Dazzled by the spotlight and distracted by online chatter, we may overlook the quiet, capable allies who will stand by us long after the media circus moves on.

What secret gifts do you possess? How attuned are you to the secret gifts of others?

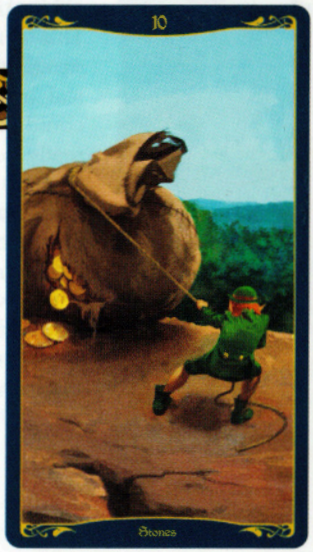
Questions to Ask

What is my secret strength? What advantages do I have that others might overlook?

What is the foundation of true confidence? What are the outward signs of inward strength?

What allies am I overlooking due to their apparent size?

Ten of Stones



Keywords

Greed and Attachment

Creator's Commentary

In the Waite-Smith deck, the Ten of Pentacles is oddly ambivalent. The older man on the card is surrounded by wealth and family, but we cannot be sure what emotion this crowded card is meant to communicate. Even Waite, the creator of the deck, isn't much help; after describing the obvious details, he assigns the meanings of "gain, riches ... the abode of a family ... chance, fatality, loss ... dowry, pension."

In most of my decks, the 10 is the point at which the full energy of the suit (represented by the nines) has lingered too long, and its effects have become oppressive. We see the same approach here, as a Clurichaun struggles with a fat bag of coins. His greedy efforts rip the bag, suggesting both loss and ruin.

Important Symbols

The bag. The bag is any burden. In readings, it's probably best to interpret this symbol as a financial or physical burden (a lingering debt … or an exhausting physical ailment).

The Clurichaun. His extended effort is no longer producing a positive result; instead, with every yank on the rope, he makes his situation worse. Sound familiar? There comes a point where we become our own worst enemies. Encountering resistance? Stop yanking, and start thinking.

Interpreting the Card

The suit of Stones is associated with practicality and physicality, while the number 10 is associated with staleness and exhaustion. Combined, these energies create a card about physical burdens and long-term exhaustion.

This card invites you to consider the burdens you struggle with – particularly those of a financial or physical nature. How much simpler life could be if we could bring ourselves to part with the things we don't really need!

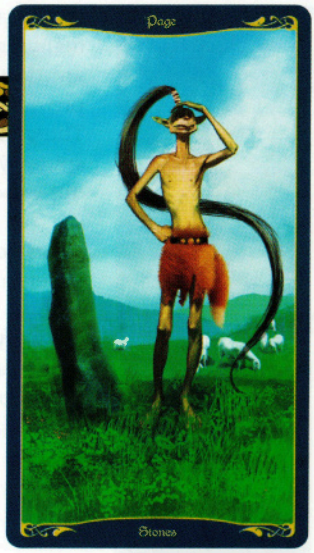
Questions to Ask

How do I respond when I meet resistance? To what extent am I willing to change strategies when old habits work against me?

What burdens could I lay down? What old values are impeding my progress?

How do I work against my own best interests?

Page of Stones

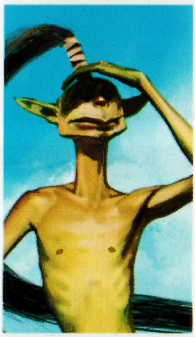


Keywords
Duty vs. Obligation

Creator's Commentary
Some tasks appeal to our sense of duty – we perform them because, in doing so, we uphold our side of a moral contract. Other tasks we perform out of obligation. Having been paid or supported in the past, we now feel obligated to provide similar services or equal support.

The gunna are a race of brown-skinned, skeletally thin creatures with long, bony limbs. They are distinguished from other fairy creatures by their long ponytails, their penchant for fox hides, and their willingness to help farmers gather crops and tend to flocks.

One wonders, though: why do they help? Why do they show up year after year, offering aid but expecting no payment? What need does this service satisfy? Is their work done out of a sense of duty to the land and its people … or out of an obligation to repay some long-forgotten debt?



Important Symbols
The gunna. The gunna help farmers, but their motivations are unclear. As a symbol, the gunna suggest the wisdom of accepting help without being too concerned about hidden motives … and without asking too many questions.

The sheep. In addition to helping bring in the harvest, the gunna tend the sheep. What services are you prepared to render? What work appeals to your sense of duty? What work would you only do out of obligation?

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, it's time to think about the roles of duty and obligation in your life. How many of

your acts are selfless? How many are selfish? How many are done with no thought of profit? How many are done strictly for the payment or advantage they provide?

The gunna know a secret: volunteerism transforms the spirit. What service could you provide to others without expectation of compensation?

Questions to Ask

Where could I volunteer? What services could I offer others?

How often do I seek out opportunities to help others? How many of those opportunities involve helping others who have no way to repay me?

What is the difference in duty and obligation?

Knight of Stones

Keywords

Craftsmanship vs. Adequacy

Creator's Commentary

There's a difference between a mass-produced item and a one-of-a-kind work of art by a real artist. The first is probably adequate for most purposes. The latter, though, in addition to fulfilling its purpose, inspires us.

Gofannon is the supernatural smith of the Tylwyth Teg, or fairy folk. He forges mighty weapons which always bear the distinctive signs of his expertise. (In addition to his mastery of the blacksmith's art, Gofannon is

always accompanied by a cow – which will only give milk to the truly needy – and is known for his ability to brew powerful ales which render the drinker immortal.)

The quality of any weapon forged or ale brewed by Gofannon is immediately apparent; there's no mistaking these for the merely adequate products cranked out by corner-cutting discounters.

Important Symbols

The art of the blacksmith. In battle, do you want a weapon that is merely adequate – or a sword designed so well that the mere sight of it strikes terror in the heart of your opponent?

The barrel. The barrel reminds us that Gofannon, in addition to being a fine blacksmith, is also a master brewer. This duality appears in the lives of many great artists, who frequently have more than one obsession.

Interpreting the Card

The Knight of Pentacles invites you to consider the role of adequacy vs. craftsmanship in your life.

When given something to build, create, or produce, are you content with merely satisfying the basic requirements of the task … or do you try to go above and beyond the basics to produce something truly remarkable?

Remember: you can bring the heart of a craftsperson to every task. Whatever work comes you way, do it with all your might.

Questions to Ask

What do I do best? In what aspects of my life am I a craftsperson?

What is my attitude toward work? Do I just do enough to get by? Do I exceed expectations? Would others find my work exceptional … or merely adequate?

Queen of Stones

Keywords
Consistency vs. Rigidity

Creator's Commentary
The Green Lady is a patron of Skipness Castle, which stands in Scotland to this day. She is not to be confused with the Green Ladies, or glastigs. The Green Lady is a specific fairy, usually associated with a specific place.
When attackers tried to capture Skipness Castle, the Green Lady confused them, causing them to wander aimlessly in the countryside. Other castles and regions have their own tales of the Green Lady – or, as some would say, they have a Green Lady of their very own.
In almost every case, a Green Lady appears when most needed, providing protection and aid in the direst circumstances. She uses her startling appearance, her stunning beauty, and her bewitching gaze to lure aggressors away … and then leaves them lost in unfamiliar territory, frightened, uncertain, and unable to find their way back to the battle.

Important Symbols
The color green. The color green has long been associated with enchantment and magic. (There's a reason why so many fairies are said to dress in green!) As a symbolic color, green connects with growth and nature. In addition, green is the color most attractive to the human eye.
The castle grounds. Castles are the ultimate symbol for protection. What things in your life are under assault? What people or things are worth protecting?

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, it's likely that there are people or possessions in your life that others would like to steal away.

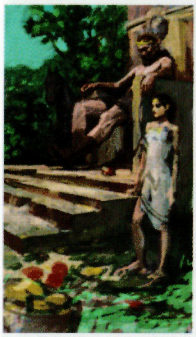
In some cases, it may be wise to share your resources and find a way to co-exist. In other cases, it may be in your best interest to do whatever is necessary to elude those who want whatever it is that you possess.
Never hesitate to cooperate – but know the difference in cooperation and "being taken."

Questions to Ask
What matters most to me? What possessions or people deserve my protection?
How can I cooperate or collaborate without sacrificing what I value most?

King of Stones

Keywords
Hardiness vs. Prosperity

Creator's Commentary
Finvarra is king of the fairies. He is particularly good to humans, to whom he grants healthy horses, fine harvests, and material wealth.
Here, Finvarra is depicted as a virile man of about forty-five years. He is long-limbed and tall, with black hair, black eyes, and fair skin. He sits on a throne of ancient, hand-carved stone. He radiates comfort and confidence. Finvarra is accompanied by a jet-black steed



– a gift for a friendly local farmer – and the remarkably bounty of a successful harvest.
On his left stands a human woman – one of many human females Finvarra has kidnapped over the years. He treats them well, marrying them and giving them dominion over aspects of his kingdom … but their prosperity comes at a price: their freedom.

Important Symbols
The gifts. On the one hand, Finvarra is much-loved, because he grants prosperity to those in his care and insures that locals have enough to eat and drink.
The bride. On the other hand, Finvarra's penchant for kidnapping beautiful young women suggests he sees at least some of those in his care as his possessions. How might losing a daughter to Finvarra impact your appreciation of the fine horse or ripe grain he leaves at your door?

Interpreting the Card
Kings represent control, and the suit of Stones is concerned with the material realm. The King of Stones usually represents a person who either possesses a great amount of physical beauty or material wealth … or who seeks to use these advantages as a way of controlling others.

Questions to Ask
If you are blessed with excess … do you use your blessings to help others … or to bribe them into seeing things your way?
What blessings do I have an excess of? What material goods do I possess in great measure?
What physical traits do I have that others would envy?
Do I use these blessings to make life better … or to force others to do my bidding?

Ace of Spears

Keywords
Power and Desire

Creator's Commentary
In lieu of the traditional suit of Wands (associated with the element of Fire and the concepts of passion and intention), the Celtic Fairy Tarot features a suit of Spears. On the Ace, we see the Spear of Lug, the primary Celtic sun god. Considered one of the four sacred treasures of the fairy people, the spear animates in battle, rapidly and methodically skewering all opponents. It must be used with care, however; once activated, the spear is so blood thirsty, it can only be restrained by burying its head in crushed poppy leaves.

The spear appears here on the Ace of Spears, a card associated with the fiery energy of intention and will. This is the card of all-consuming desire, and it is illustrated with a phallic object for a reason. Desire motivates. Pair it with a plan, though, or, like the Spear of Lug, it may run amuck.

Important Symbols
The Spear. The spear is a symbol for pure, unreasoned arousal. It represents something we want or desire or intend to do – before this desire has coalesced into a plan or achieving that desire.

The Color Red. Red is associated with fire, blood, and romance. Like the red cape a bullfighter wields in the arena, this flash of color prompts us to charge ahead, go for our goal, and pursue our most consuming passion.

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, it's time to think about what you want and why you want it. If you have no goal in

mind, it's time to define one.
This card may also be associated with sexual arousal, goal-setting, or the need to admit what we really want. It may also be a reminder of the need to pair action with vision – to get up, get going, and achieve a long-delayed dream.

Questions to Ask
What do I really want? Why do I want it? What outcome would I prefer to avoid?
Where does my passion lie? What really gets me going? What role does desire play in this situation? Who wants what? How do these desires complement or conflict with each other?

Two of Spears

Keywords
Options and Decisions

Creator's Commentary
Luchtaine (also called Luchorpain) is a supernatural woodworker charged with the business of manufacturing weapons and shields for fairy folk. Here, he offers two expertly crafted spears to a fairy customer. Both spears are of excellent quality; either one would would make a fine acquisition.
We tend to prolong this moment – the debate prior to the decision – despite the fact that, on some level, the decision has already

been made. Going with your gut doesn't mean thinking with your intestines; instead, it suggests that there are parts of the mind that think faster than conscious processes can follow. Learning to trust that "gut feeling" can be frightening ... but once you do begin listening to the "still, small voice," you may discover it possesses a wisdom the conscious mind, for all its logic, lacks.

So: A or B? This or that? It's time to mimic our fairy customer – and make a choice.

Important Symbols

Two Spears. The two spears represent two options. Both have their merits and limits; it's our job to explore what's possible and then make the best decision we can.

The Decisive Customer. Our fairy friend points to one spear, indicating her readiness to choose. She reminds us that the responsibility for making a choice is ours – and ours alone. Commit – and own the consequences.

Luchtaine. Examine his posture. Are subtle influences shaping the fairy's choice?

Interpreting the Card

The Two of Spears suggests a choice between equally attractive (or unattractive) options. Both options are available to you; neither stands out or distinguishes itself in any way. Still, every choice matters – so we wonder, worry, and weigh the evidence over and over again.

It's time to end the agony. A part of you knows what's best for you and others; let that part guide what might seem to be an unconscious choice.

Questions to Ask

What are my options? What do I really want ... and why do I want it?

How might I be the victim of subtle influence? How can I be more objective?

To what extent am I influenced by fear? How can fear be set aside?

Three of Spears

Keywords
Action and Exploration

Creator's Commentary
Leprechauns love a tasty vintage, and here, three of these temperamental fairies may be seen investigating an abandoned chalice of sweet red wine.
You can research a decision forever, making lists and comparing configurations – but, no amount of academic research can offer the quick, visceral insights supplied by a little first-hand experience. Does the wine look sweet? Has it been out in the elements too long? Has it been poisoned? Sometimes, the only way to know the truth is to kneel down, whip out your cup, dip it in the spill, and take a sip.
If you elect to become a creature of action, you will find no shortage of people willing to stand on the sidelines, criticize your decisions, and draw conclusions about you, your efforts, and the subject at hand. Ignore them. You had the guts to take a drink.
Everyone else? They're still thirsty.

Important Symbols
The Overturned Chalice. Like many of life's opportunities, we have no idea where this chalice came from and no idea where its owner may be. Meanwhile, while the leprechauns glance around, good wine is evaporating in the sun and seeping into the ground. Some opportunities are limited, so make your decisions accordingly.
The Single Drinker. In life, there are explorers and onlookers … bold heroes and timid followers. Dislike your role? Change your choices.

Interpreting the Card
An opportunity has presented itself, and the time has

come to make a choice.
The Two of Spears (see the previous card) is about deliberation, debate, and the need to commit. In the more action-oriented three, the decision has been made, the commitment has been honored, and the plan has been set in motion.
The only decision now is this: will you be the maker of change … or just an observer on the sidelines?

Questions to Ask
What role am I prepared to play in making my dream come true? What action embodies commitment?
Do I want to be an explorer … or a commentator?
What's better: to do … or to review?
What's the boldest possible course of action? What might its consequences be?

Four of Spears

Keywords
Celebration and Achievement

Creator's Commentary
The Waite-Smith version of this card features a harvest-themed canopy held aloft by four tall wands. In the background, a procession of celebrants approaches, holding bunches of grapes and bouquets of flowers aloft.
This card is clearly a nod to Pamela Smith's design, with spears in place of the wands. But in the Celtic Fairy Tarot, the celebrants have arrived, attended by four masculine fairy warriors. Wind-blown streamers pre-

serve the party atmosphere. And, in the foreground, a fairy couple – tiny, innocent, focused on each other – makes a public declaration of their love.

The original script called for details that couldn't be preserved here: an acorn in the hands of the groom and a walnut in the hands of the bride. As symbols, these suggest the potential hidden in what, at first, appear to be insignificant things. Remember: pausing to celebrate can be as important as forging ahead.

Important Symbols

The Honor Guard. Passing between the members of the honor guard is symbolic of our need to pass through trials and challenges on our way to a moment of achievement. Having completed our journey, we emerge, transformed, on the other side.

Spring. The setting – a springtime meadow – suggests renewal, rebirth, and revitalization. Appreciation and celebration boost energy and provide motivation for the journey ahead.

Interpreting the Card

There is a time for pursuing your dream ... and a time for pausing, reflecting, and celebrating where you are and how you got here.

This card is ruled by the stabilizing influence of the number four (a symbol of stability) and the suit of Spears (intention). When paired, these energies become an expression of stable intention – a time when agendas align, dreams merge, and advancement is set aside in favor of celebration.

Questions to Ask

What do I have to celebrate? How long has it been since a celebration?

How might my agenda be more closely aligned with those of my allies?

How is my journey transforming me? What small victories deserve greater appreciation?

How might reviewing achievements inspire further progress?

Five of Spears

Keywords
Conflict and Competition

Creator's Commentary
In a tiny clearing, two fairies battle for possession of a single spear. Their intense focus on their goal prevents them from noticing several important details.
First, four spears – identical to the one they are fighting over – lie discarded on the ground before them. Nothing distinguishes the contested spear from the other four – nothing, that is, apart from the fact that this one, for some reason, has become an object of contention.
Second – and more importantly – their personal little war has attracted the attention of at least one hungry tabby. Anyone who has ever owned a cat knows about their obsession with shiny objects and tiny, winged creatures; if these two fairies don't broaden their vision, they may soon have more to worry about than each other.
When you're in a fight, it's wise to keep at least one eye on your opponent.
With the other, watch for cats.

Important Symbols
Four discarded spears. Sometimes, our exclusive focus on one option keeps us from considering others – any of which might serve our needs just as well. Re-evaluate your goal. Are there easier or less contentious outcomes that might offer similar (or greater) benefits?
The cats. Know your enemy – and be aware that the obvious enemy doesn't always pose the greatest danger. In the rush to eliminate a small hurdle, don't lose sight of the bigger picture.

Interpreting the Card

Once blood pressure rises, reason tends to go out the window. Suddenly, we find ourselves drawing lines, making demands, and insisting on conditions that, minutes before, didn't matter.

Whatever your situation, it's time to take a deep breath, step back, and reassess your goals. Conflict has its uses, and taking a stand at the right time is critical. Just make sure that flare of anger doesn't ignite an all-consuming bonfire!

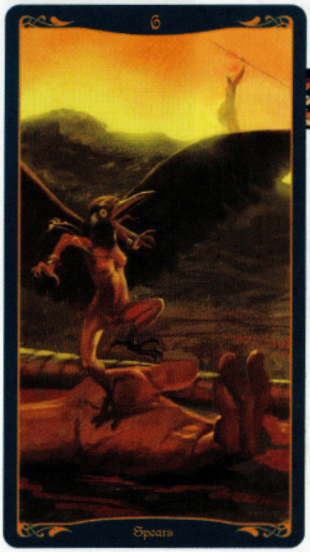
Questions to Ask

What's the real source of my anger or frustration? Is there an apparent cause that differs from the real cause?

How might I relieve tension by redefining my goal?

How can I win by redefining the terms of success?

While I'm fighting this fight, who's got my back?



Six of Spears

Keywords

Victory and Fame

Creator's Commentary

In the background, we see a Celtic warrior, his spear raised in victory. His pose recalls the triumphant posture of the more familiar figure on the Waite-Smith version of this card.

In the foreground, the Macha – a creature known to feed on the energies released by combat and death – dances on the body of a fallen warrior. She is frequently seen on the battlefield in her guise as a hooded crow.

We are so quick to celebrate victory, we sometimes tend to overlook that victories for one side are often losses for another. For every battle won, there is a battlefield littered with the bodies of the fallen. In short: victory and defeat go hand in hand.

We may not celebrate death in the way the Macha does ... but when celebrating our victories over our enemies, we would do well to pause and count the cost.

Important Symbols

The Victorious Warrior. Any victory worth winning requires effort. What effort or discipline does your battle require? How can you attain or apply it?

The Dance of Macha. The Macha is an evil spirit, feeding on blood lust and carnage. How can you insulate yourself from the all-too-human tendency to gloat of the defeat of others?

The Defeated Warrior. How does your victory spell defeat for someone else? How might someone else experience your victory as a defeat?

Interpreting the Card

This card is often a herald of victory or pending victory, and serves as an invitation to consider how winning and losing plays a role in your current situation. What would be a win? What would be a loss? And what would be the cost of a victory or defeat?

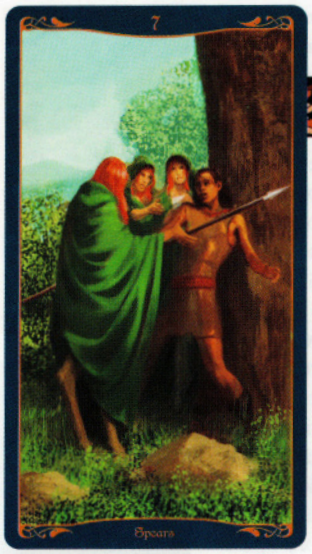
To avoid being seduced by the evil energy of the Macha, remember to be graceful in both victory and defeat.

Questions to Ask

What will it take to win? How will my victory be experienced by others?

What can I do to make my victory something others will want to celebrate? How can I engineer a true win-win?

How do I feel about defeat? How can defeat become a tool for growth?



Seven of Spears

Keywords
Defensiveness and Determination

Creator's Commentary
Given the emphasis on victory in the Six of Spears, we may be surprised to encounter a need to defend ourselves on the Seven. But this is life: once you win a victory, you have possessions to defend and a reputation to maintain.

To illustrate the need for constant vigilance, I've chosen the story of the Baoban Sith. These beautiful women, with their red hair, fair skin, and green attire, charm human males with their good company, exquisite dancing, and beautiful voices. They use these qualities to distract their victims from one important detail: from the waist down, the Baoban Sith have the bodies of does!

Ultimately, they lead their unwary prey to a secluded spot and feast on the unfortunate fellow's blood. The lesson: when flatterers and silver-tongued people offer you exactly what you want, the time has come to be especially aware of your surroundings.

Important Symbols
Apparent harmlessness. Ultimate intentions may not be apparent. Before investing trust in someone, take a moment to assess the degree of harmony between his or her words and actions.

Half woman, half doe. The Baoban Sith are physically incapable of delivering what they promise their victims, making their offers all the more sinister. Before signing up for a venture, be sure the benefits offered are viable. Before committing, do your homework.

Interpreting the Card
There is a difference between caution and paranoia.

This card urges you to err on the side of caution. There are desires at work here (Spears), but something related to these desires remains unexpressed (Seven). Ask questions. Do research. Kick the tires. Check under the hood. If you find what you expect to find, move forward with confidence. In the meantime, though, don't fall for sugar-coated words and baseless promises.

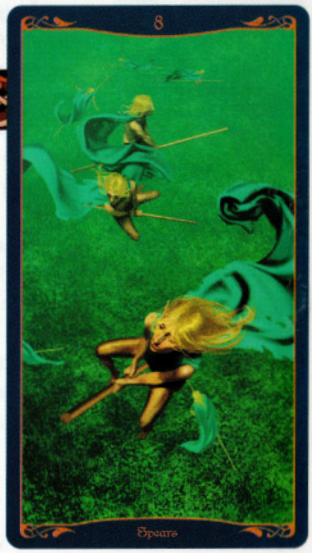
Questions to Ask

How well do I know the person making this offer? What evidence do I have that this person's word is trustworthy?

How can you defend yourself against those who would take advantage of you?

What questions are you repressing in order to seem nice or keep the peace?

Eight of Spears



Keywords

Swiftness and Activity

Creator's Commentary

In this illustration, we are confronted with a tumbling, confusing vision of playful fairies engaged in a dizzying, hyperactive game. They streak through the sky on twigs, sticks, broomsticks, and spears, moving in every possible direction at once. The swarm is a fantastic sight, but its passage leaves us dizzy and disoriented.

What was the purpose of this airborne parade? What goals were achieved? What work

was done? We aren't sure. All we do know is that, for one brief moment, action and intention were intertwined, and a flurry of activity resulted.

This is what happens when work (Eight) and intention (Spears) combine without the benefit of forethought. The results might be interesting or amusing; we might feel engaged or busy. But without a master plan, we may find ourselves flailing around in all directions, our energy spent ... without much to show for our efforts.

Important Symbols

Wands, sticks, twigs, and spears. Traditionally, this suit is illustrated with Wands, a symbol for intention and will. Here, every conceivable type of wand is put to every conceivable use. Might it be time to pick a goal ... and stick with it?

Frenetic activity. Being busy is not the same as being productive. Find a channel for your energy, apply it to a goal, and make real progress.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's time to take stock of what you're doing and how you're doing it. Are you working according to a plan? Are you pausing to take stock of your progress? Do you have a well-defined goal in mind? Is there a solid connection between your activity and the pursuit of that goal?

This card suggests there's a disconnect between your direction and your action. Before moving ahead, check the map.

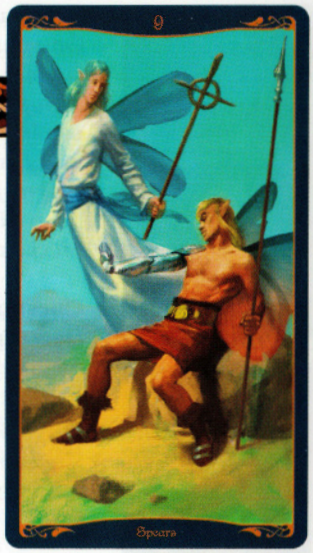
Questions to Ask

What's the goal? Which activities move me closer to the goal? Which ones delay victory?

What's the difference between being busy and being productive? How can you tell the difference?

Why do you feel dizzy or distracted? What can be trimmed away in order to make real focus possible?

Nine of Spears



Keywords
Persistence and Stamina

Creator's Commentary
Nine is a number associated with completion; Spears is the suit of intention. Put these together, and you get the Nine of Spears ... a card about being empowered to complete plans and achieve goals.
To illustrate this energy, I chose Dianceht, the magical healer of the fairy folk. Dianceht has the ability to awaken dead warriors and to heal wounds received in battle. He crafts replacement limbs out of the purest silver, animates them with magic, and bestows them upon brave survivors of fairy conflicts. When fairies are defeated and broken, Dianceht provides whatever is needed to heal broken bodies and weary spirits. As a result, he serves as a reminder: a setback need not become a loss. When plans fail, there are alternatives. When wounds ache, we can find a balm. With our end result in mind, we find the support needed ... and keep fighting toward the goal.

Important Symbols
Dianceht. Dianceht's wispy form belies his incredible restorative powers. When plans go awry, his talents provide new hope and new energy. Who is your personal Dianceht? Who or what makes it possible for you to persevere?
The silver limb. Instead of restoring original limbs, Dianceht provides artificial replacements. Our wounds enlighten us; rather than take that away, Dianchet provides a (literally!) valuable reminder of the past ... while also enabling us to forge ahead.

Interpreting the Card
This card suggests a strategy: acknowledge your set-

backs, accept an alternative plan, and keep moving. On your way to any goal worth reaching, you'll encounter obstacles. In any battle worth fighting, you'll earn wounds. Rather than yearn for easy passage or painless growth, make up your mind to embody flexibility and persistence.

A silver limb is not the same as one made of flesh and bone – but rather than mourn what you've lost, try appreciating what you have.

Questions to Ask

How can I be an instrument of healing for others? How might I be someone else's "silver limb?"

In what ways do I need to be healed? What wounds do I carry? What have I learned from them?

Have I anticipated setbacks? What's my Plan B?

Ten of Spears

Keywords

Exhaustion and Depletion

Creator's Commentary

In lieu of the more familiar figure weighed down under a bundle of wands, we see here a brownie – hard workers with a mischievous streak a mile wide – slipping away with a weary warrior's spear. Exhausted from battle, the warrior sleeps too deeply to be jolted awake by the brownie's activity; the brownie, seduced by greed, continues to try to drag the spear away, even though his energy is depleted.

Exhaustion and depletion, by the way, are not always negative qualities! Sometimes, these states of being help us realize the error of our ways, coach us to seek change, or remind us that we have, at some point, veered away from the path we set out to take. Rather than reject this energy (or the lack of it!), take time to ask, "What actions led me here? What actions will lead me back to a place of energy and abundance?"

Important Symbols

The Sleeping Warrior. Though capable in battle, the warrior is useless when exhausted. What are you doing to keep yourself charged and energized? How can you avoid exhaustion and over-exertion?

The Sneaky Brownie. Brownies are tireless workers, but they have been known to bite off more than they can chew. How might the size of your burden be working against you? How can you lighten your load? How might work be working against you?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, effort and determination have taken you as far as they can take you. It's time to consider another plan of action: setting all action aside. There's a point at which your work begins working against you and when progress ceases to be a positive force in your life. Rather than keep lunging forward, consider the value of stopping, breathing, and being. The time has come to watch and wait.

Questions to Ask

How can I get more done by doing less?

What would happen if I redefined by goal? What is the potential benefit of scaling back my efforts? How might rest or relaxation make me more productive?

What contributes to my exhaustion? What activities recharge or renew me?

Page of Spears

Keywords
Response vs. Reaction

Creator's Commentary
The fachan is a bizarre creature. He has one tuft of hair atop his head, one eye, one hand sprouting from the center of his chest, and one leg he uses to hop along at high speed. I selected him as the Page of Spears because of his physical features (which suggest an almost primordial, unfinished state) and his attitude (specifically, his eagerness to be involved in battle).

In Tarot, the Page is more enthusiastic than experienced, and the Page of Wands, in particular, has strong desires and bright goals in mind … but lacks the finesse to pursue them with depth or confidence. The fachan embodies these qualities – eager, but unproven … hungry for victory but lacking a plan.

It's easy to criticize the fachan. It's interesting though, how often we criticize in others the traits we, ourselves possess! Who in your situation is rushing ahead, even when circumstances dictate a more sober approach?

Important Symbols

The fachan. This creature looks like a half-finished toy made by a forgetful god, assembled from spare parts and brought to life before being made whole. You have a goal in mind – but are you really prepared to pursue it? In what ways are you as unfinished as the fachan?

The rush to battle. Enthusiasm will only take you so far. Where can you find an experienced warrior willing to pair his or her insight with your high-energy approach?

Interpreting the Card

You're eager to get started, to make a difference, to move ahead. At the same time, though, your inexperience prevents you from seeing your own shortcomings. If you like, you can plow ahead, possessed of a single-minded vision. But if you want to improve your chances of success, you should consider the value of a plan that's not half-baked.

What's the rush? Pour that enthusiasm into getting the experience you lack.

Questions to Ask

Where can I find an experienced mentor to temper my short-sighted enthusiasm?

How can I maintain my enthusiasm while acquiring the experience I need?

What is the nature of the new desire I'm feeling? How can I be sure this is passion – and not a passing fancy?

Knight of Spears

Keywords

Selfishness vs. Selflessness

Creator's Commentary

Allen Mac Midhna, a fairy musician known for his fiery breath and poisonous spear, longed to play for the Samhain festival at Tara. Intent on his performance, he failed to notice the impact of his efforts: his music lulled the entire audience – every single fairy at the festival, from the fairy King to the least experienced guard – to sleep!

For one brief moment, the entire fairy kingdom lay exposed and vulnerable – all be-

cause one fairy felt realizing his lifelong dream of being a public performer was more important than the well-being of everyone else.

In this way, he embodies the peculiar energy of the Knight of Spears. This Knight is linked to action ... but always has an agenda. Will that goal be selfless (and undertaken with the well-being of others in mind) or selfish (and pursued without regard for its impact on the health and happiness of others)?

Important Symbols

The passionate performance. The best artists express themselves while also forging a connection with the audience. Allen Mac Midhna gets so lost in his own work, he neglects to consider what impact is work has on those around him.

The poison spear. It's possible that others – who might have spoken out against this dangerous performance – were silenced by their fear of the spear. What good advice are others afraid to bring to you?

Interpreting the Card

Knights are cards of action and extremes. If you've drawn this card, it's time to consider whether your actions are selfless (or performed in service to others) or selfish (and taken strictly with your own needs in mind).

This is a difficult thing to do, since we are experts at convincing ourselves that others will be served best by a relentless pursuit of our own best interests. Unable to be objective? Ask an objective outsider.

Questions to Ask

If I achieve my goal, what will happen to me? What will happen to others? In the end, who wins ... and why?

In what ways might apparently selfless acts be self-serving? How might taking care of yourself be the best possible way to care for someone else?

Queen of Spears

Keywords
Foresight vs. Insight

Creator's Commentary
Morrigan is a repulsive hag. When she stumbles on a battle in progress, she joins the fray; before the warriors realize it, her agenda replaces their own. Soon, the men on the battlefield have forgotten their original goals … and their hearts and minds are in Morrigan's cruel, sharp-clawed hands. Oblivious to the change, they rage against friends and foes alike, wreaking havoc for its own sake.
Here, we see Morrigan directing a battle. As the chaos spreads, her power grows. If the leaders cannot identify this subtle shift in energy, victory will belong to Morrigan, and there will be no one left to celebrate it … but her.
Persuasive leaders channel Morrigan's energy to sway hearts and minds, feeding the frenzy of public opinion as a way to divert attention from their own misdeeds. To avoid unanticipated outcomes, look ahead; to avoid subtle sabotage, take stock of the now.

Important Symbols
Morrigan. In the heat of battle, it's all too easy to get caught up in the moment – and, before you know it, you're fighting … but not for a cause. Reassess your goal – and the sooner, the better.
Subtle influence. The unfortunate soldiers in this misdirected battle do not realize that someone else has assumed control. What unseen puppeteer is pulling your strings? What advisor or outsider has taken over … without you even knowing?

Interpreting the Card
You're in a situation you could not anticipate, and unexpected developments are carrying you – perhaps

against your own will – in directions you did not foresee. That being the case, a little insight is called for. What went wrong? When did your direction shift? What course corrections are needed now?

You can't foresee every possible pitfall ... but with insight on your side, you can avoid distraction ... and take corrective action.

Questions to Ask

How can you avoid distraction? How long has it been since you compared your progress to the goal you set out to achieve?

Who is in control? How might others be exerting subtle control over your direction – perhaps even without your knowledge? How can you assume control again?

King of Spears

Keywords

Pretense vs. Purpose

Creator's Commentary

At your doorway stands a fairy with a splendid name: Fear Dearc. Also known as the Red Man, he generally appears in the form of a little gnome or dwarf. With his jaunty hat, his bright little eyes, and his gay attire, he looks so harmless ... but is he?

When Fear Dearc comes knocking, he makes one request: can he come inside and warm himself by the fire? Turning him away invites disaster, because, behind that sweet

face, our little friend has quite a temper. But inviting him in has a downside, too, because Fear Dearc's favorite pastimes are thievery and mischief.

No one likes to see Fear Dearc at the door. At this point, though, you've answered the knock, so now you have a choice to make. Do you turn him away – and wait, and worry – or do you ask him inside and sleep with one eye open?

Important Symbols

The pleasant exterior. You can't always judge a book by its cover – and you can't judge a fairy by the sweetness of its face. In your situation, how might appearances be deceiving?

The hidden agenda. Fear Dearc just wants to sit by the fire a bit – or so he says. What role does deception play in your situation? How have you deceived others … and how might they be deceiving you?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn the King of Spears, the time has come to consider the merits of honesty and deception.

An ethical being states his or her agenda outright, and those who tell the truth at all times sleep easier than those who don't. That said: you can't sell steak without some sizzle, and there's no law that forces us to put all our cards on the table at once.

Truth is a tool. How are you using it? How is it being used against you?

Questions to Ask

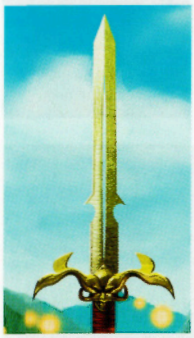
How do you choose between two unpleasant choices? What do you really want? How honest have you been about that desire? To what extent are you saying one thing … but yearning for another?

What role do false choices play in your situation? To what extent have all your choices already been made?

Ace of Swords

Keywords
Logic and Communication

Creator's Commentary
I'm most at home in the suit of Swords, where the twin illusions of logic and analysis reign supreme.
The sword makes a good symbol for dispassionate reasoning. The razor-sharp blade cuts through nonsense, creating comforting dualities. Once a sword has sliced down the middle of an issue, we find ourselves on one side of the argument or the other: right or wrong, true or false, on the left or on the right. The sword leaves no middle ground, no room for debate. We like this simplicity. No shades of gray!
Here, we see Nuada's infallible sword, one of the four magical objects sacred to the fairy folk. The sword is powerful because it always strikes true. Since most of us are not lucky enough to carry a sword enhanced with fairy magic, we should always be aware of how our own agendas impact our use of logic and reason.



Important Symbols
The Sword. In literature, swords are always associated with decision-making and logic.
In the Old Testament (1 Kings, Chapter 3) two women come to wise King Solomon, each accusing the other of having stolen her baby. Solomon calls for a sword, offers to split the child between the two women, and correctly assumes that the true mother would rather see her baby live than be divided.
Rulers, whose decisions impact the lives of many, are said to have the "sword of Damocles" hanging over their heads.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn the Ace of Swords, you have been empowered to make a decision. Options swirl around you. Now, it's up to you to take responsibility ... and make a choice.

As you make your decision, set your emotions aside as much as possible and strive for objectivity. Get to the facts. Apply what life has taught you, depending on your experience and intellect to show you the way.

Questions to Ask

What information do you need to make a wise decision? What facts do you lack? How can you find out more?

What would King Solomon do? What wise advisor might assist you now?

How much do you trust your own ability to solve problems and make choices?

Two of Swords

Keywords

Debate and Disagreement

Creator's Commentary

In a green, mossy forest, a human Druidess stands at a fork in an unfamiliar road. In one hand, she carries a sword, representing her sharp intellect; in the other, she carries a bundle of mistletoe, a plant the Druids associated with many things, including protection from evil influences.

In the foreground, two identical fairies offer conflicting advice, one urging her to

bear left, the other insisting she should turn to the right. She has a decision to make – but which advisor should she trust?

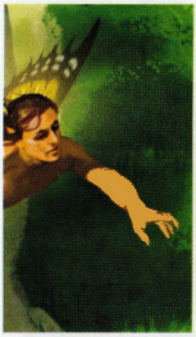
Older decks sometimes assign this card the keyword "Truce," but in the Celtic Fairies deck, the only truce to be had is with yourself. Debates can last for hours. Deliberation can be drawn out for days. Some people waste lifetimes allowing the question "What if?" to hinder their progress and stunt their evolution.

You've read the reviews. You've asked for advice. Now choose!

Important Symbols

Mistletoe. In Ireland's harsh winters, mistletoe was much beloved for its evergreen properties, which kept trees looking green long after leaves had fallen. Druids revered it, believing it offered mental clarity and protection from evil influences.

Two Advisors. The two fairies offer conflicting advice. As you travel through life, you may often encounter situations where the facts don't add up ... and it's up to you to make a choice based on your own insight.



Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you're divided against yourself. The situation calls for clarity and unity, but you are literally "of two minds," bouncing back and forth between two options.

At the root of this dilemma is a failure to trust yourself. This card is an invitation to declare a mental truce: stop waffling, stop wavering, pick a direction, and go. You can always correct your course later. For now, the important thing is to forge ahead.

Questions to Ask

How trustworthy are your advisors? To what extent does their advice empower you? To what extent are you overly dependent on their advice?

When the best path isn't clear, how willing are you to trust your own ability to make a good decision?

Three of Swords

Keywords
Heartbreak and Disappointment

Creator's Commentary
The Three of Swords recalls the myth of the fairy king Midar. Midar became romantically involved with a human woman, but the romance was doomed from the start. Because she was human, the object of his affection could never be fully accepted by Midar's subjects … and because she was already married, his affections for her were doubly inappropriate.

In an effort to find a way they could be together, the obsessed King Midar turned both himself and his would-be bride into swans. Eventually, though, the arrangement proved unsatisfactory, because it did not allow the partners room to simply be themselves. Midar, heartbroken, reversed the enchantment and sent his wife home.

Have you ever made a decision that seemed good at the time … but that you later regretted and wish you could reverse? If so, you'll have special insight into the meaning of the Three of Swords.

Important Symbols

Three Swords. The swords represent the sobering process of waking up to reality.

The first sword represents an initial decision, made with the best intentions but with little information. The second sword represents the realization that our first choice was not the best. The third sword represents the decision to circle back, reverse the first decision, and work to make things right again.

The Swans. The swan lovers represent misguided passion and its tendency to distort good judgment.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you have likely made a choice that, over time, appears to have been inappropriate. All signs point to the need to reverse your decision. Now, you have another choice to make: do you continue down a problematic path ... or admit your error and make a correction?

A true intellectual must do more than "stay the course." If the road you picked isn't leading to your destination, the wise thing to do is turn around!

Questions to Ask

What will happen if you continue down an inappropriate path? What are the possible benefits of reversing your decision?

What can you learn from your mistakes? How can these mistakes make you wiser in the future?

Are you mature enough to admit a mistake?

Four of Swords

Keywords

Sleep and Meditation

Creator's Commentary

I love the cool, green peace of this card: the sleeping Druid, the metallic glow of a magical sword, and the two fairy attendants, taking special care not to wake the sleeping master.

Though associated with sleep, the Celtic Fairies Four of Swords is not about napping. Readers with an eye for detail will notice that our Druid friend is enshrouded in greenery, and that his sword has been all

but hidden by a creeping vine. He has slept here, in the womb of the forest, for a very long time. This is a magical sleep, deep and powerful. When the Druid awakes, he will be more than renewed – he will be completely transformed.

Most of us spend the day drinking directly from a non-stop, high-pressure fire hose of information. The Four of Swords reminds us that shutting off the mind and returning to nature can be a balm for the world-weary spirit.

Important Symbols

The Sleeper. His mind is at rest, and the cares of the world have been left behind. We make better decisions when we back away, calm ourselves, and make a dedicated effort to still our swirling thoughts.

The Sword. That sword is going nowhere. Rather than force yourself to make a decision now, take a break, get some rest, and make the decision later! You will be more effective when your mind is clear.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, it's time to take a deep breath, step away from the situation, and get some much-needed clarity. You are too close, too caught up in emotion, to make a wise decision.

Take a walk. Spend some time in nature. Meditate. Let go.

When you return, your task will still be waiting for you – but you will be a new person, seeing this too-familiar problem with newer, sharper eyes.

Questions to Ask

How often do you make time to stop thinking, stop deciding, and simply be?

How can you become comfortable with the choice to refrain from making choices?

How can you reclaim the time and space needed to withdraw, reclaim perspective, and feel centered and rested again?

Five of Swords

Keywords
Mischief and Annoyance

Creator's Commentary
There's a wise old saying: "Let sleeping dogs lie."
These naughty Clurichauns are choosing to ignore it. On their way through the forest, prowling for a lost keg of ale, they have stumbled on a sleeping wolfhound. Rather than let their canine friend rest comfortably, the Clurichauns – true to their nature – cannot resist taking advantage our four-legged friend's exhaustion.
One lifts the pup's ear. The other readies his horn. We all know what's coming.
To the Clurichauns, this all seems like great fun ... in the present moment. One wonders, though, if these two will still be laughing when a strong young wolfhound several times their size wakes and comes scrambling after them!
The intellect can imagine many things – and not every idea will be a good one. In order to distinguish good ideas from bad, we must often look ahead. Where will today's choices take you tomorrow?

Important Symbols
The Clurichauns. Ragged and unkempt, the Clurichauns' obsession with inappropriate antics constantly places them – and others! – in danger. In your situation, who are the people responsible for stirring the pot? How can you limit their potential for making mischief?
The Sleeping Dog. Once awake, our canine friend will likely be too frazzled to think clearly. How can you move past shock and annoyance? How can you move from startled reaction to reasoned response?

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you're in a situation where petty bickering, minor annoyances, or innocent misbehavior have escalated, over time, into a potentially explosive confrontation.

You may be the victim. You may also be the instigator. Whatever the case, it's time for everyone to back down, reassess the situation, and rethink their strategies. If things move forward now, confrontation awaits. Avoid conflict, stress, and unpleasant surprises by reassessing your goals and methods.

Questions to Ask

How do I respond to stress? To annoyance? To troublemakers? How can I remain calm when faced with these?

How can you make progress without enraging others? What will the consequences of your decision be? Who will suffer? Who will profit?

Six of Swords

Keywords

Travel and Dislocation

Creator's Commentary

While walking through rural Ireland, you might be tempted to look for a fairy path – a well-worn, straight-line path leading from one sacred site to another. Don't bother! Fairy paths – the parade routes of the fairy folk – are invisible to the human eye.

Even so, locals have long known these routes, and they are taken very seriously. For years, builders avoided blocking fairy paths when erecting new homes and shops.

When plans called for a home to block a path, builders would deliberately align the doorways so that the fairies could pass unimpeded when the doors were left ajar.

Blocking a path has consequences. Shops blocking fairy paths inevitably go out of business, and residents of paths suffer illness and misfortune. Wise builders, knowing this, would sketch the outline of a proposed home in the earth; if the lines were undisturbed come morning, building would commence.

Important Symbols

The Fairy Path. Like the invisible energy lines associated with feng shui, the lines of a fairy path are metaphors for flow and alignment. Honoring the fairy paths equates with honoring traditions and acknowledging the value of local wisdom.

The Aligned Doorways. The aligned doors of this Celtic home allow fairies to pass unimpeded when doors are left open. These doors are a metaphor for "going with the flow," or behaving in ways that honor tradition.

Interpreting the Card

Six is the number of collaboration; Swords is the suit of intellect and logic. The Six of Swords, then, is a card about collaborative decision-making – in this case, allowing traditional or local points of view to influence your rational process.

As you travel (through the world, or through life), it's wise to seek the counsel of locals, who, by virtue of living in it, know the lay of the land.

Questions to Ask

In your situation, who are the "locals?" Who might have wisdom borne of walking this path before you? How are your actions "blocking the fairy path?" What can you do to bring your actions and intentions into alignment with "the flow?"

Seven of Swords

Keywords
Stealth and Suspicion

Creator's Commentary
Butter spirits look like little old men. Their hair is white, long, and stringy. Their skin is a sickly yellow-green. They have large, sad eyes and bulbous noses, and never stand higher than two feet tall. Dressed in hats and robes of dark green velvet, they look as cute as can be.

Looks are deceiving. Butter spirits, no matter how adorable they are at first glance, have one purpose: to suck the "good" out of cream. After a visit from a butter spirit, you can churn fresh cream for hours – but it will never turn to butter, no matter what you do.

We don't churn butter much any more – but almost all of us have work to do, and, occasionally, no matter how hard we try, we somehow miss the mark. Is that our fault? Perhaps – but it's easier to believe butter spirits sucked the sweetness of victory away!

Important Symbols
The butter spirit. When plans go awry, we often find ourselves asking, "What went wrong?" It's easy to blame the spirit world – to say the deck was supernaturally stacked against us. It's much harder to examine our own actions, identify our own shortcomings, and plot a new course.

The ruined cream. There's no use crying over spilt milk … and no saving ruined cream. Rather than fret over lost opportunity, perhaps it's best to get fresh milk!

Interpreting the Card
Seven is the number of imagination, and Swords is the suit of logic and reason. The Seven of Swords, then, is

a card about coming up with reasons (or excuses!) for the events in our lives.

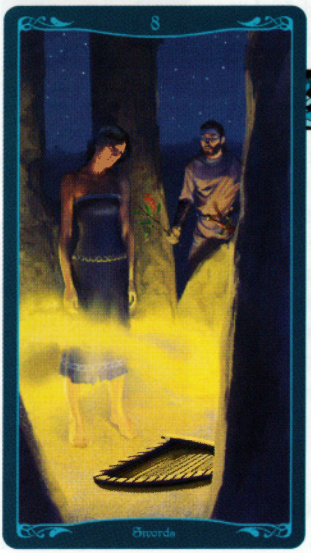
In your situation, what went wrong? You can devote a great deal of time and energy blaming others. Or, if you want to be more productive, you can focus on your own actions, make adjustments, and learn from your mistakes.

Questions to Ask

What role did my own actions play in creating this situation? How can I take ownership?

What blame am I assigning to others? How might I be blaming others for a situation I created?

What stories do I tell myself to avoid taking responsibility?



Eight of Swords

Keywords

Restrictions and Resolutions

Creator's Commentary

Fairies tend to move in straight lines from one sacred site to the next. Upon arrival at their destination, they tend to gather around it in a circle. The energy they leave behind creates a "fairy circle" – a ring of energy (usually invisible to the eye, but sometimes marked with a circle of mushrooms) that has a tendency to trap or enchant those who step inside.

Artists, musicians, and dancers are especially susceptible of becoming trapped in fairy cir-

cles. When this happens, the magic entrapment can only be broken by bridging the circle with a rowan branch.

Sometimes – in creative projects, at work, in life, in relationships – we get caught up in a vortex of circular energy. Despite our best intentions, we go around and around, expending precious effort, but gaining no ground.

We need a warrior with a rowan branch: someone honest enough to break the cycle and show us the way out.

Important Symbols

The fairy circle. You aren't likely to be trapped in a fairy circle, but most of us have experienced the feeling of going around and around without making much progress, especially when working on artistic projects!

The rowan branch. The Celts valued rowan for its divinatory properties; rowan branches are especially well-suited for wands and dowsing rods. Rowan is associated with clarity of vision, suggesting the need to redefine goals and revise our approach.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you feel trapped or restricted in some way – you've reached a limit, or fallen into old habits, or feel creatively or professionally blocked.

Rather than travel around and around in circles, get yourself a metaphorical rowan branch. Take a break. Refill your creative reservoir. Perform some divination. Any or all of these can heal your spirit, reveal new directions, and help you find new direction.

Questions to Ask

How long has it been since you did something to renew your inner artist? How long since you sought out training or guidance from someone more experienced?

In your situation, what behaviors contribute to "going around in circles?" What behaviors would defy the circle and set you free?

Nine of Swords

Keywords
Shock and Surprise

Creator's Commentary
For me, the story of the changeling is one of the most chilling in the fairy canon, mostly because of the painful realities that are masked by the metaphor.
Fairies find human infants inordinately fascinating, and Celtic folklore is filled with stories of fairies kidnapping unsupervised babies. In an effort to prevent victimized parents from discovering the theft, wicked fairies may leave behind a changeling -- a wizened, ugly creature with a large bald head, oversized eyes, a wide mouth, and sharp little teeth. Swaddled in blankets, he could easily be mistaken for a baby. Revealed, he becomes a starting metaphor for regret, disappointment, and loss.
Things don't always turn out the way we planned. Relationships falter. The final product fails to find its market. The finished song lacks melody. The novel is dull. The business deal collapses.
Where we expected to find our beautiful baby – we find a repulsive changeling.

Important Symbols
The changeling. Early on, changelings were likely a mythic way of making sense of paternity issues, deformity, or sudden infant death. Today, the changeling is a good metaphor for any situation that fails to resolve itself the way we hoped it would.
Once a changeling replaces a baby, it may linger – demanding affection and attention – for years before it dries up and withers away. How many years (and lives!) are wasted, tending to metaphorical changelings?

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, you may have discovered a changeling in your own life: a boyfriend, perhaps, who is suddenly far less pleasant to live with, or a project that, once completed, feels like a total waste of precious time.
You have options. You can nurse the changeling – perpetuating the pain and wasting your energy – or you can take the advice of the Nine of Swords, cutting your losses by making tough choices.

Questions to Ask
How does the outcome differ from what I expected? How can I move past disappointment and shift to action? What decisions have I been putting off? How can I take control by making a final decision? How is indecisiveness prolonging my pain?

Ten of Swords

Keywords
Finality and Consequences

Creator's Commentary
A fairy tree is distinguished by its strangely twisted trunk, odd shape, or gnarled limbs. Any species of tree may become a fairy tree; the designation is awarded based on appearance alone.
Fairies do not appreciate human meddling in fairy affairs – and cutting down a fairy tree is one of the most serious offenses a human can commit. Anyone who chops down a fairy tree will be hunted, stalked, attacked,

and even killed by vengeful fairies, who see the tree as a reflection of their magical influence on the natural world.

It seems unfair that the simple act of chopping down a tree should carry the death penalty. But fairies have rules and laws of their own, and, from their perspective, your reasons for chopping down the tree are completely irrelevant.

When you've reached the Ten of Swords, you've gone as far as reason can take you.

Important Symbols

The chopped tree. The chopped-down tree is a metaphor for an action taken that cannot be reversed. Asking "Why?" or fantasizing about different choices is irrelevant at this point; the only useful plan of action is to answer the question, "Now what?"

The vengeful fairy. The fairy here represents the consequences of our irreversible action – a reminder that, if we wish to avoid certain consequences, we would be wise to avoid the actions that produce them.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, your current situation is, in some way, the result of decisions you've made in the past. For reasons of your own, you chose to act (or not to act). Now, you must deal with the aftermath of that choice.

Rather than waste time justifying yourself or wishing things were different, pour your energy into embracing the present moment ... and making better choices in the future.

Questions to Ask

How have my own decisions contributed to this situation? What role did I play?

What decision could I make right now that would help put things right?

How can I move past regret and fantasy and begin dealing effectively with the reality of the present moment?

Page of Swords

Keywords
Bravery vs. Stupidity

Creator's Commentary
Here, a young male fairy is on the verge of battle with a potentially overwhelming opponent. The yellow jacket matches or exceeds the young fairy's speed and agility, and its armor is clearly superior. One has to wonder: what transgression led to this confrontation?
Whatever the catalyst, it's clear that, at this point in the story, a choice has been made. The young fairy will not flee; instead, he has elected to stand his ground and fight.
Perhaps this is not the young fairy's first fight. It may well be that, in the past, he has confronted this sort of monster before. He may know its weaknesses.
But it might also be true that this is the fairy's first battle. What if the decision to stand and fight is rooted in noting but ignorance?
Bravery ... or stupidity? This is the question that haunts the Page of Swords.

Important Symbols
The yellow jacket. This species of wasp is known for its anger and aggression. It serves nicely as a metaphor for a dangerous situation of any kind. Things are moving quickly, and a sharp sting awaits the sluggish warrior.
The fairy warrior. This fairy symbolizes the nature of your choice. Is it really worth it to stand and fight ... or would your ultimate goal be better served by saving this battle for another day?

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn the Page of Swords, it's time to think seriously about your reasons for fighting ... and your odds of victory.

If the battle is an important one, it's worth fighting, even when the odds are stacked against you. Taking a stand for a worthy cause is the very definition of bravery.

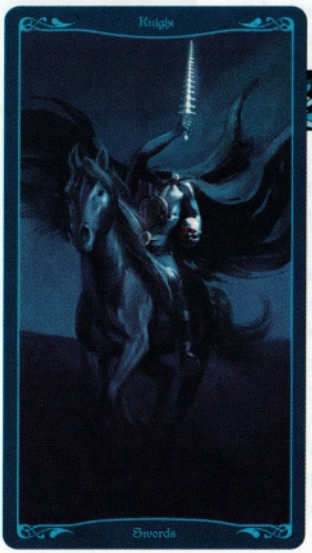
But when the skirmish is minor or the motivations petty, risking life and limb may have more to do with ignorance than bravado!

Questions to Ask

What are the benefits if you win? What are the consequences if you lose?

How can you be sure this fight is worth giving or sacrificing your all? Are the stakes really that high?

What's the difference between bravery and stupidity? Are stupid actions ever brave? Are brave actions ever stupid?



Knight of Swords

Keywords

Brashness vs. Focus

Creator's Commentary

A dullahan is likely the inspiration for the headless horseman stories told in many different cultures. Wrapped in black robes, a dullahan rides a black steed through the dead of night, carrying his own skull in one hand. The skull will say only one thing: the name of a person who is about to die. Resistance is futile. Anyone who tries to come between a dullahan and his destination receives a bowl of human blood to the

face. (This may also mark this person as the dullahan's next victim.) The dullahan also makes short work of protesters with his sword or whip (fashioned from a human spine); he has a particular penchant for flicking out their eyeballs.

For all his fearsome presence, the dullahan is terrified of gold; the smallest golden implement (even a pin, a ring, or a brooch) will send him galloping in the opposite direction.

Important Symbols

The headless figure. The absence of the head – or its displacement from the top, or ruling position, of the body – suggests there is no reasoning with the Dullahan. In your situation, to what extent has the role of reason been displaced by anger or fear?

The one name. The dullahan's power derives from his intense focus on his task; the only word he speaks is the name of his victim. By limiting distraction, he gets more done.

Interpreting the Card

If you've drawn this card, you're caught up in a battle between an intense desire to charge blindly forward and a very real need for a focused, well-defined plan. When lost, do you strike out in some direction – any direction! – or do you consult a map? When in a crisis, do you try to handle everything at once – or do you outline a clear plan and proceed step by step?

Questions to Ask

What are the advantages of brashness? What are the advantages of careful deliberation? How can you know which tactic is most appropriate?

What situations call for control and clear thinking? When is it useful to be able to "remove your head" and charge forward?

Queen of Swords

Keywords
Criticism vs. Encouragement

Creator's Commentary
Like Whoopity Stoorie, the loireag, a water spirit, offers aid – usually assistance with an impossible sewing task, which she completes with her magic needle. If her unfortunate victims cannot guess her name, she demands bizarre payment. Further, if she encounters a bad or careless seamstress, she is likely to prick the poor woman with the magic pin.

In addition to providing on-the-spot reviews of needlework, she also fancies herself to be a music critic. In Scotland, she is well known for bedeviling those whose admiration for their own singing voice far outstrips their talent.

She embodies the basic tensions that lie at the heart of the Queen of Swords: the urge to offer support and assistance balanced against a tendency to offer harsh, biting criticism. Consider the feedback you're giving others. When offering your opinions, do you tend to gravitate toward insight ... or invective?

Important Symbols

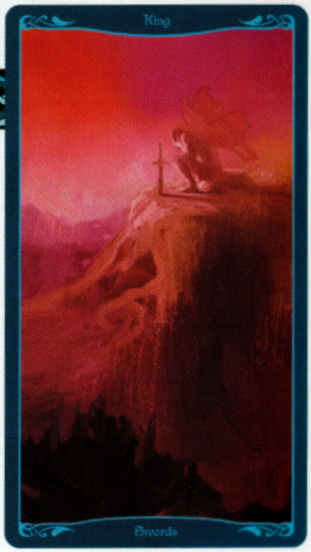
The magic needle. The magic needle reminds us that the loreiag's skill depends on the use of a magical implement; her powers as a seamstress are not rooted in practice or personal achievement. Before positioning yourself as an authority, it might be wise to get some work done!

The singer. Not everything we do is a performance; sometimes, we sing for the joy of singing. Before critiquing a singer, make sure your comments have been invited.

Interpreting the Card
If you've drawn this card, it's time to look at the feedback you're offering others – and the input they're offering you. Are the insights constructive and rooted in reality? If so, they're worth far more than a golden needle. But if the comments being made are intended to prick instead of polish, you might be wise to seek advice from a less toxic source.

Questions to Ask
How can I offer criticism without being destructive? How can I encourage improvement without shattering the soul of a performer or creator?
What is the source of my authority? To what extent are my own insights rooted in achievement (instead of mere opinion)?

King of Swords



Keywords
Responsibility vs. Results

Creator's Commentary
Kings are associated with control and regulation; Swords is the suit of logic and reason. Combine these energies, and you get the King of Swords – a character who controls others by logic and values an orderly mind.
Here, we see Breas, a former king of the fairy folk who reigned for a symbolic seven years. He was an exquisitely beautiful and charismatic creature, but he lacked generos-

ity. He raised taxes, refused to pay debts, and was stingy with praise, rewards, and even ale. Eventually, his own warriors refused to support him.

Like all of us, Breas acted according to logic and reasoning of his own. His undoing, however, was rooted in his fatal flaw: an inability to question the accuracy of his own conclusions.

In the end, Breas lost his throne because he failed to take action in the best interest of his people.

Important Symbols

The fallen king. Each of us has beliefs that govern the way we live, work, and see the world. These beliefs rule our perceptions, limiting our vision and coloring our decisions. From time to time, it can be valuable to "dethrone" these assumptions, seeing life from an entirely new perspective.

The lost kingdom. If our choices lead us to a place of loss, will we sit atop a mountain and grieve for what could have been ... or rally the troops and return to the fray?

Interpreting the Card

The King of Swords encourages us to examine the assumptions that control us.

A leader has tremendous responsibility to those who follow. With their best interests at heart, a mature leader constantly questions his or her own motives. Is the course of action under consideration for the good of the people ... or a petty grab for glory?

Time will tell. In your situation, the results you achieve will be the evidence of your clear thinking ... or lack thereof.

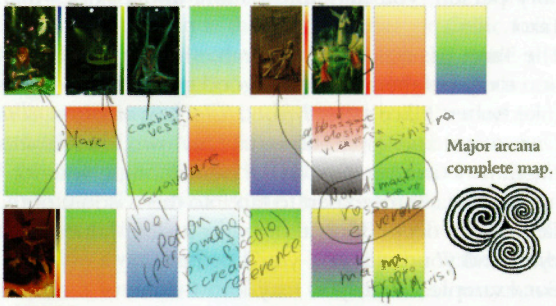
Questions to Ask

How often do I question my own assumptions? How can I review decisions without appearing weak or wavering? How long has it been since I took a good look at my own motives?

What results am I achieving? What do these have to say about me and my approach?

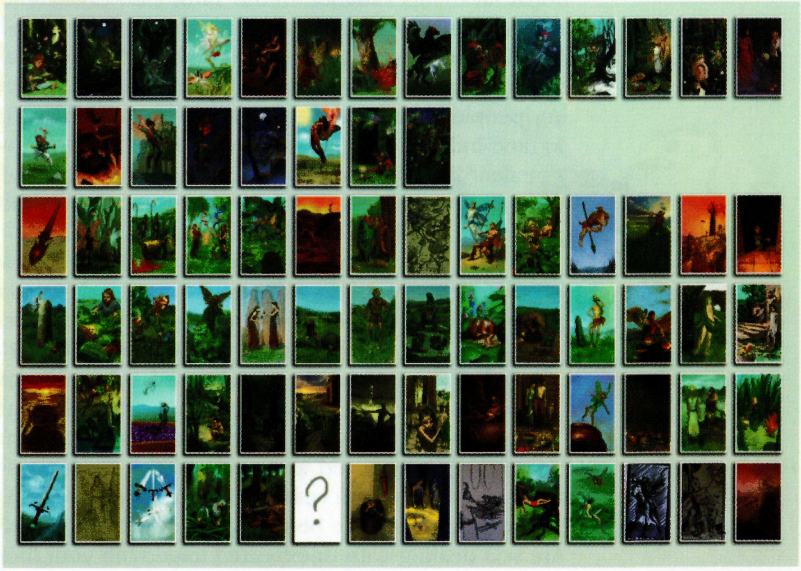
Understanding Tarot

The Celtic Fairy Tarot, like any Tarot deck, has its own personality – its own visual vocabulary, or its own way of offering advice, guidance, and commentary on your questions. Building a relationship with the deck, much like building a relationship with a person, requires a willingness to set expectations aside and appreciate a perspective other than your own.



Major arcana complete map.

The working maps created by the artist are part of the creative process. In the Celtic Fairy Tarot there is underlying color scheme, that can't be noticed consciously in the finished cards.



Different Approaches

A deck like the Tarot of the Celtic Fairies has likely been purchased by one of two kinds of people: fairy people and Tarot people.

Fairy People

By "fairy people," I mean people who have been drawn to the deck by their love for fairies and fairy lore. As a fairy person, you may know more about fairies than Tarot.

The Tarot has a rich and venerable history as a divination tool, and there are many good guides to its origins (like Robert Place's *The Tarot: History, Symbolism, and Divination*) and applications (like my own *The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Tarot*). For now, though, you don't have to be a Tarot expert to tap into the wisdom of the Celtic Fairy deck. Bring along your love of fairies, your eyes, and your wits, and you'll be just fine.

For example: while you may know none of the traditional meanings assigned to the Tarot card called The Tower, you may already be familiar with the story of Amadan (who is also called "The Stroke Lad.") If so, then you know that Amadan was infamous for attacking people unprovoked, lashing out without reason, and inflicting sudden, disfiguring illnesses on innocent human beings. You may also know that the only defense against his power is to whisper the prayer, "The Lord be between us and harm."

Amadan is a metaphor for any sudden, devastating event. His story stirs in us a desire to avoid these kinds of incidents ... but also to ask, "Should this ever happen to me, what would I do?"

So when you draw The Tower card in answer to your question, you can begin by relating what you know about Amadan's story to your own situation. Have you experienced a sudden "shock to the system?" Do you feel you've been attacked for no reason? Has someone you love been diagnosed with an illness? Are you dealing with unexpected tragedy in your life?

In addition to reflecting your situation, the card could also recommend a range of strategies for dealing with adversity: prayer, affirmation, folk wisdom, or even spell-casting.

Using this process – using your fairy knowledge to work out the meaning of a card – you will often be able to "read" many cards without having to look up their meaning in a book.

Tarot People

By "Tarot people," I mean people who have been drawn to the deck primarily because of their passion for Tarot. As a Tarot person, you probably are more familiar with the Tarot than with fairies or Celtic folklore. There's good news for you, too: because the fairies in this collection have been mapped to the familiar structure of a Tarot deck, you will often achieve intuitive insights into the meaning of each card, even if you are unfamiliar with the fairies depicted on them.

One note of caution: some Tarot people, having become extremely attached to one deck (often, the first deck they ever worked with – usually the Waite-Smith deck or a version of the Tarot of Marseilles), may have difficultly connecting with other decks.

For example: having become used to seeing a wistful farmer on the Seven of Pentacles, some Tarot people feel every deck should feature a similar image on the equivalent card. When they see a stone-throwing boy attacking a pair of fairies on the Celtic Fairies Seven of Stones, they may balk. ("Where's the farmer? Where's the vine, laden with Pentacles? Oh, this isn't like the Waite-Smith deck at all!") But with a little reflection, they may come to see a connection between the two cards (in this case, themes of regret or disappointment).

Some illustrations may recall the composition of the Waite-Smith cards, while others may defy these conventions. Rather than be concerned with the difference, see the

change as an opportunity to see an old friend dressed up in new clothes. In doing so, your perception of the card and its range of meaning can be greatly enhanced.

Along the same lines: many cards in the Tarot of the Celtic Fairies feature meanings based on equivalent cards in other decks. In some cases, though, the meaning in the guide may differ significantly from more familiar meanings suggested by other books and decks. The shift in meaning is part of this deck's unique accent. Why not try the new meaning on for size? If you don't like it, you're not bound to use it ... but if you can find a way to be comfortable with the change, you may find yourself achieving insights that a traditional deck would never suggest.

Sketches, storyboard and composition

Meeting the Deck

I've been collecting Tarot decks for more than a decade, and now have several hundred decks in my collection. Whenever I come across a new or unexpected find, I still feel like a kid on Christmas morning: I want to tear open the wrapper and plow right in, thumbing through the deck to see as many of its images as quickly as possible.

Perhaps you have already done this with the Celtic Fairies Tarot. If so, it's likely that you've already seen some cards that you connected with immediately ... and some that left you wondering, "Okay, what was he thinking?" That's perfectly normal – and there's nothing wrong with this approach.

That said: fairies are, for the most part, shy creatures. They are notorious for hiding when humans come blundering through their territory. As a result, a high-speed tour of this deck is likely to leave you with little more than a few fleeting impressions. May I suggest another technique?

Ordering

The deck should arrive with the cards in sequence; if it does not, of if you have already shuffled it, please place the cards in this order:

- The Majors, or Trumps, from 0 to 21.
- The suit of Cauldrons, from 1 to 10, followed by the Page, Knight, Queen, and King of Cauldrons
- The suit of Stones, from 1 to 10, followed by the Page, Knight, Queen, and King of Stones
- The suit of Spears, from 1 to 10, followed by the Page, Knight, Queen, and King of Spears
- The suit of Swords, from 1 to 10, followed by the Page, Knight, Queen, and King of Swords

Sorting

With the cards in this order, beginning with The Fool (Trump 0), move slowly through the deck, spending from thirty to forty-five seconds exploring the image

on each card. (If you pace yourself, this exercise should take forty-five minutes to an hour … but it will be, I assure you, an hour well-spent!)

As you move through the deck, place each card you encounter in one of three piles:

• ***Favorites.*** In this pile, place all the cards you feel an immediate affinity for. These cards may feature an illustration you really like or a story you already know. Perhaps you're drawn to their color, or their title, or their number. But for some reason – and, at this point, you don't even have to know what that reason is – these are the cards you feel a connection with right away.

• ***Neutrals.*** In this pile, place all the cards you don't quite "get" – the cards which, when you see them, don't seem to provoke much of a response at all. Maybe the illustration differs from what you expected, or perhaps the picture seems divorced from meanings you've learned in the past. But for some reason – for whatever reason – these are the cards that you could take or leave.

• ***Obstacles.*** In this pile, place all the cards you just don't like – the cards that provoke, on first sight, a strong negative response. Maybe the way a character is dressed (or undressed!) offends you. Maybe the illustration fails to incorporate a symbol you feel is critical to the understanding of the card. Or perhaps you find the image on the card disturbing or cliché or frightening. But for some reason – for whatever reason – these are the cards you really, really don't like.

Once the piles have been created, count how many cards are in each pile. Which pile is largest?

If your favorites pile is largest, then the odds are very good that you and the Celtic Fairies will get along. For whatever reason, the deck has found you at a time when your interests and ideas and ways of seeing the world parallel those of the fairies. For you, this deck is very likely to become a faithful companion on a new voyage of self-discovery.

If your neutrals pile is the largest, then, for you, this deck may take some getting used to – but, I suspect, the end result will be worth the effort. Give the deck some time. Read the entries for a few cards that puz-

zled you. Try making this deck your reading deck of choice for a week or two. See what happens.

If your obstacles pile is largest – especially if it contains fifty cards or more – then this may not be the best deck for you. And that's okay. (In fact, that's why there are so many decks out there!) Rather than fret over the fact or try to force yourself to work with a deck you don't care for, set the Celtic Fairies aside. (You might also want to place an ad on Ebay, so the deck can make its way to the home of someone who may be able to enjoy it.)

Exploring

For now, though, I'll assume – since you're still reading – that your favorites or neutral piles won the sorting competition. It's time for the adventure to begin!

Beginning with the favorites pile, spread the cards out so that you can see them all. Do you see any patterns? Do certain symbols or colors turn up in the majority of the cards from this pile? What suit dominates the pile? How many trumps are in the pile?

Once you have finished exploring the favorites pile, move on and complete this same examination with the neutral pile and the obstacles pile. What patterns do you detect in each? And – more importantly – do these patterns reveal anything in terms of situations you may be facing in your life?

Finally, to conclude the experiment, pull two or three cards from each of your piles – remembering, of course, the pile each card came from. Spend some time with each card, looking over the artwork and checking to see if there are details you missed before. Can you guess what the meaning of the card (or the story behind it) might be?

When you finishing examining a card, turn to the related passage in this guide and read the associated story. How does knowing the story behind the card change the way you feel about it? Take note of how your perceptions change.

Working with Spreads

When a Tarot reader arranges cards in a deliberate pattern on the table as part of a reading, that pattern is called a spread. Spreads are made up of positions – one position per card in the spread – and, usually, the reader assigns a meaning to each position in the spread.

For example, one of the simplest Tarot spreads of all is the past, present, future spread, in which three cards are laid out in a straight line:

past **present** **future**

The meaning assigned to each position provides a context for interpreting the card in that position. In past, present, future spreads, the first card on the left is assumed to represent an event in the past, while the middle card represents the current situation. The card on the right, in the future position, is said to represent an outcome or development that hasn't yet occurred, but is considered very likely.

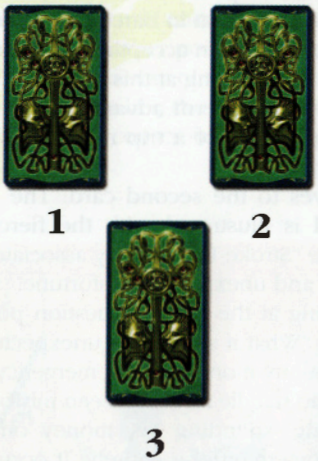
A past, present, future spread is a good basic spread for beginners. In addition to this spread, this guide includes two spreads developed especially for the Celtic Fairy Tarot:

- The Fairy's Flight
- The Fairy Processional

The Fairy's Flight

Like the past, present, future spread, the Fairy's Flight is a simple, three-card spread. It can be very useful when you need to make choice between two possible options. For example:
– Do I want this job ... or that one?
– Should I stay ... or should I go?
– Should I go to the mountains ... or go to the beach?

Positions
The spread itself consists of the following positions:



Card **1** – An Insight into Option One
Card **2** – An Insight into Option Two
Card **3** – A Word of Advice
The shape of the spread is meant to suggest a fairy in flight, with two wings extended.

Reading with The Fairy's Flight
Jessica has been invited to go to Barcelona with three of her friends. She would enjoy the vacation, but if she goes, she will have to fund the trip with the money she's been saving to buy a new car.

Should she take the much-needed vacation ... or save her money? Hoping for insight, she draws three cards, arranging them in the Fairy's Flight spread:

Card 1 – Insight in Going to Barcelona – 4 of Stones
Card 2 – Insight into Saving Her Money – The Tower
Card 3 – A Word of Advice – The Empress

The Four of Stones is illustrated with the story of the Lunantishee, the fierce guardian of the blackthorn bush. From her previous experience with Tarot, Jessica equates this card with the keyword "selfishness." But when she checks the entry for this card in the guide, she sees a question that catches her eye: "What are you willing to fight for?"

Saving money for a car has been a real struggle for Jessica, and she is proud of the progress she's made so far. While a vacation in Barcelona would be pleasant, it would also mean accepting defeat in her "fight" to save money. Looking at this card, she realizes that sacrificing the long-term advantage of a car for the short-term pleasure of a trip might not be the best choice for her.

Jessica moves to the second card: The Tower. The Tower card is illustrated with the fierce image of Amadan, the "Stroke Lad," a fairy associated with sudden attacks and unexpected misfortune.

While looking at the card, a question pops into Jessica's mind: "What if something unexpected came up, and I needed my money for an emergency?" Spending her savings to handle an unforeseen misfortune would be one thing; spending her money on a vacation would be something else entirely. It occurs to Jessica that she likes having a "nest egg." Even though she has earmarked the funds for the purchase of a car, she still thinks of the money as a safety net – money that would be there if a desperate need arose.

Finally, Jessica turns to the third card: The Empress, in the Advice position. Because of this card's association with nurturing and feminine energy, it always reminds Jessica of her mother. As a result, she is prompted to ask, "What would my mother tell me to do?" Jessica doesn't even have to debate this; she knows her thrifty mother would say, "Save your money."

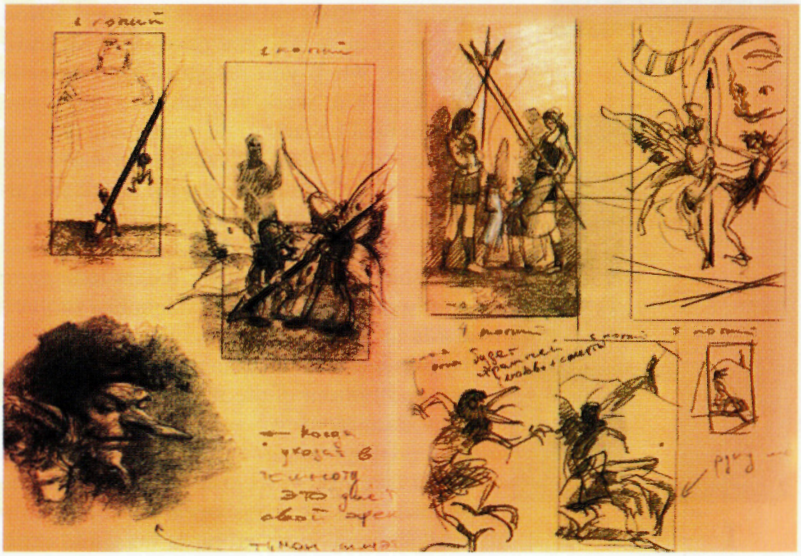
Based on this spread, Jessica declines the vacation and saves her money. She feels good about the choice, because – while the vacation would have been pleasant – saving her money is the option that is more in line with her long-term goals.

A Note about This Spread

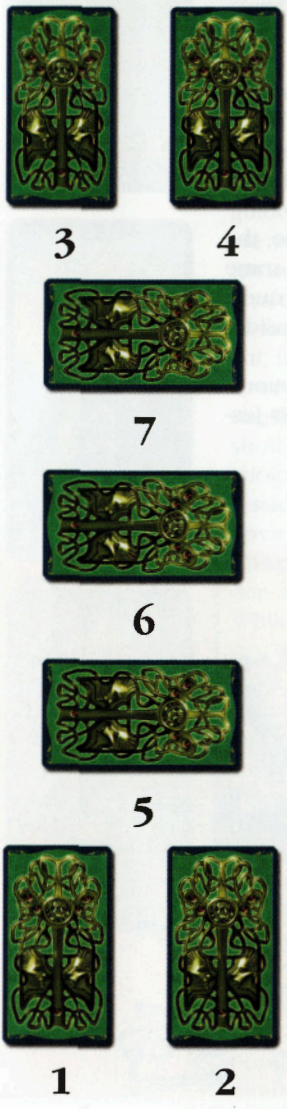
People unfamiliar with Tarot frequently say, "Why would you trust your fate to seventy-eight pieces of laminated cardboard?" Because they don't know much about Tarot, they imagine that those of us who work with the cards are turning to an oracle to tell us what to do.

It's important to note that, in the above example, the cards in no way tell Jessica what to do. Instead, some cards become triggers for ideas, insights, and questions... while other cards encourage her to consider her situation from another point of view.

The spread becomes a way of thinking about options. Instead of debilitating her, the spread empowers Jessica to make a more conscious choice.



The Fairy Processional



The Celts believed fairy parades – or "processionals" – traveled along invisible lines of energy that crisscrossed the countryside. They believed that blocking one of these routes (usually by building a home on it) would incur the wrath of the fairies, bringing disaster to those who committed the offense. The families living in the structure blocking the parade route often suffered terrible consequences, including inexplicable infant deaths, sudden illnesses, and financial ruin. Rather than abandon their homes, owners would sometimes try a less drastic cure: leaving the front and back doors open at night, so that the fairy parade could pass through the home unimpeded.

From time to time, all of us experience energetic blockage in our lives. It comes in many forms: the novel we never finish, the class we never take, the well-intentioned action we never quite take, the good deed we leave undone. When you recognize an energetic blockage is at work in your life – and when you're finally ready to do something about it – the Fairy Processional spread can be a powerful tool for removing the block and allowing the creative energy to flow.

The shape of the spread is meant to suggest a fairy processional (the straight line of three cards in the middle of the spread) blocked by two sets of doors (the pairs of cards at the top and bottom of the spread).

Important Note: when using the Fairy Processional spread, it is customary to deal the cards face down. As you work through the spread, turn the cards over, one by one. In addition, as you reveal cards 1 & 2 and cards

3 & 4 – the "doors" of the spread – shift them slightly to the left and right, making room for the fairy processional (the three centered cards) to pass easily through the doors.
The impact of this visual – seeing your obstacles to success opened so that your creative energy can flow freely – can be dramatic and therapeutic!

Positions
Cards **1&2** – Fears and Concerns
Cards **3&4** – Hopes and Dreams
Card **5** – First Idea for Action
Card **6** – Second Idea for Action
Card **7** – Third Idea for Action

Reading with The Fairy Processional
Roberto has worked on a novel for three years, on and off. Despite his best intentions – and his strong desire to be a novelist – he simply can't bring himself to finish the manuscript, polish a final draft, and send the book off to a publisher.
After shuffling the deck, Roberto deals himself seven cards, arranging them in the Fairy Processional spread:
Cards 1&2 – Hermit and 4 of Cauldrons
Cards 3&4 – World and 8 of Spears
Card 5 – 2 of Cauldrons
Card 6 – 5 of Swords
Card 7 – 2 of Stones

Roberto begins with cards 1 and 2 – the cards representing his hopes and fears. The first card he turns over is the Hermit, which, in the Celtic Fairy Tarot, is associated with the tale of St. Murgen. Glancing at the guide, he sees the keyword "Seclusion" – and admits that one of the obstacles to completing his work is his extremely social nature. Because he cannot turn down any invitation to drinks, dinner, or dates, he has very little time to devote to the work he claims to love.
Card 2, the Four of Cauldrons, brings to mind a darker side of the same issue. Even when Roberto accepts invitations from his friends, he cannot fully enjoy himself, because he spends the evening thinking, "I should be working on my novel." While smiling on the out-

side, he is brooding and unhappy on the inside, because he knows he is neglecting his work.

Having "opened" the doors of his fears and concerns, Roberto now reveals card 3, the first of two cards associated with his hopes and dreams. Here, he finds the World – a delightful card depicting a riotous fairy processional in full swing. The image brings to mind the celebration he has always imagined having upon the publication of his first book: surrounded by friends, signing copies of the book, a published author at last!

Card 4, the Eight of Spears, suggests a flurry of activity. (The keywords for the card, in fact, are swiftness and activity.) Roberto thinks about the times he has become lost in his work – those rare moments when he writes quickly and easily, carried along by the energy of creation. He longs for that feeling, and realizes that he is happiest when he makes time to experience this creative state on a daily basis.

Having opened the doors of his Hopes and Dreams, Roberto now looks at the three cards intended to give him ideas for forging ahead:

Card 5, the Two of Cauldrons, immediately brings his relationship with his girlfriend, Lena, to mind. She has been understanding and supportive, sharing his dream of authorship – but she is beginning to show signs of impatience as the completion of the book shifts forward again and again. He decides that, for him, this card suggests apologizing to Lena for his procrastination ... and enlisting her help in dedicating more of his time to the completion of the book.

Card 6, the Five of Swords (Mischief and Annoyance) immediately brings his friends to mind. They are noisy, brash, loud, and wonderful – but their constant interruptions are keeping him from reaching an important milestone. He considers telling them how important finishing the book is ... and decides he could still see his friends on weekends (and enjoy their outings more) if he dedicated his weeknights to the book.

Card 7, the Two of Stones, is a reminder that there are always options and alternatives – and that actions always have consequences. Does he have the willpower to make the right choices? Can he forego immediate

pleasures, resist temptation, and take the wisest course of action? This card suggests he can ... if he will dedicate himself to doing the right thing!

Roberto finishes his reading with a more positive outlook. He makes a mental note to talk with Lena about the changes he wants to make – and heads off to start writing.

Making the Deck Your Own

Over time, the Celtic Fairy Tarot can become a trusted friend and advisor – a wise voice, offering commentary and insight when you need it most.

It draws its wisdom from two powerful sources: the rich vein of practical knowledge encoded in Celtic folklore and the vast reservoir of insight that has been, over the centuries, mapped to the cards of a Tarot deck. These resources, blended together, make the Celtic Fairies deck an unusually potent personal oracle.

Gaining access to the full potential of the Celtic Fairies Tarot is a matter of time and practice. As you learn the stories behind the cards, you'll begin to recognize how these apparently fanciful tales often contain sobering insights into the realities of life and love. As you work with the deck, you'll begin to see how the structure of a Tarot deck, paired with age-old traditional meanings assigned to each card, enables you to make associations and connections you would otherwise overlook.

If you are willing to approach the deck with an open mind ...

... if you are willing to hear its unique voice and see your world from its unique perspective ...

... and if you are willing to trust your own powers of intuition and observation ...

... the fairies will become your constant companions, putting their own special blend of magic and mania to work in your life.

Enjoy the journey!